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SHEPHERD.KNAPP

THE

PUBLISHING HOUSE

OF

BLACKWOOD

Yours most affectionately
W. Hackwood

Annals of a Publishing House

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD

AND

HIS SONS

THEIR MAGAZINE AND FRIENDS

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BY

MRS OLIPHANT

VOLUME I.

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
153-157 FIFTH AVENUE
1897

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I DEDICATE THESE VOLUMES TO THE MEMORY OF MY OLD AND VALUED FRIEND, MRS OLIPHANT.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD.

PREFATORY NOTE.

It was a project ever present to the mind of my late uncle and partner, John Blackwood, with whom I had the pleasure and great advantage of working in the closest intimacy for over twenty years, to use the abundant records of the firm for some permanent chronicle of the earlier portion of its history. He entertained the conviction that it behoved him to pay to the memory of his father and elder brothers the tribute of putting on record the not uneventful annals of the publishing house and the 'Magazine' which William Blackwood founded, together with some account of the brilliant band of authors and contributors whom his energy and his very genuine love of literature succeeded in rallying to his support. And in addition to this natural motive, it was further my uncle's belief, and one which, as

his successor, I am fain to share, that the history of 'Maga' and its contributors would contain much that was of literary value as illustrating a strangely interesting period of our literature, and in especial as furnishing some important side-lights on the progress of the periodical press. Unfortunately it was not given to the projector of this scheme to live to witness its commencement. My uncle died after materially adding to the history of the firm without having had time to superintend the chronicling of its past.

A few years ago, when I was talking with Mrs Oliphant over some new outlet for her ceaseless literary activity, the happy thought struck me of asking her to carry out my uncle's idea and to become the historian of the firm in whose service she was already an honoured veteran. For forty years she had worked incessantly for the 'Magazine,' intimate with its history, thoroughly imbued with all its traditions, and very loyal to its past. Mrs Oliphant eagerly accepted the trust, entered into its fulfilment with even more than her wonted enthusiasm, and, with a pathetic prescience of what was to come, regarded the work as a fitting completion of her long and strenuous literary life. To my great sorrow, this anticipation has proved only too true, and two volumes of the history of 'William Blackwood and

his Sons,' which was all that their faithful and accomplished ally had overtaken, are now submitted to the public surrounded by the melancholy interest attaching to a posthumous work.

It is proper to add that the first of the three volumes of these annals was carefully revised by Mrs Oliphant before her last illness: for any errors in the second I am responsible. To give these two volumes a certain completeness, it has seemed to me best to furnish them with an index.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD.

45 George Street, Edinburgh,
August 1897.

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WILLIAM BLACKWOOD

AND

HIS SONS.

CHAPTER I.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD.

BIRTH AND ANTECEDENTS—APPRENTICESHIP TO MESSRS BELL & BRADFUTE —THE BOOKSELLERS OF EDINBURGH—HE IS AGENT TO MESSRS MUNDELL IN GLASGOW—INTRODUCTION TO HIS FUTURE WIFE—GOES TO LONDON —THREE YEARS IN CUTHILL'S—LETTER OF MISS STEUART IN REPLY TO PROPOSAL—ESTABLISHMENT IN SOUTH BRIDGE—MARRIAGE—DEALER IN OLD BOOKS—AGENCY OF BALLANTYNE, AFTERWARDS OF JOHN MURRAY—FIRST PUBLICATION—LETTER OF SIR WALTER SCOTT —THOMAS M'CRIE—JAMES HOGG—MISS FERRIER.

WE will not begin the history of the house of Blackwood with the "ell of genealogy" which, according to Lockhart, is appropriate to every Scotsman. Such preliminaries are unnecessary to a man who, in a better sense than that of any of the Norman invaders of whom others brag, was the father of his own fortunes. It may be almost taken for granted that every man in Scotland in the end of last century

who came to any note could, if he took trouble enough, or if the Lyon Office and court of honour had been as active as it is now, have proved easily enough his own descent from, or attachment to, some rural house of great or small gentry, the vigorous and continually multiplying race which threw out offshoots in every generation, not only into the learned professions, chiefly law, and into the army, but also into the humbler medium of the trades, when the house was too full to hope for commissions and appointments enough to take them all in. The world was tolerably full then, though not so crowded as now; and though a boy's living did not in those days hang on the uncertain chance of an examination, yet there was a limit, very quickly reached, to a country laird's means of influence and patronage. It was the hackneyed thing to say, which every noble father says accordingly to every son, in fiction and the drama, that the only profession which could be adopted by a gentleman was that of arms. If the Scots lairds were ever so foolish, which we doubt, they changed their minds when there were seven or eight Quentin Durwards to send forth into the world. Sir Walter Scott puts into the mouth of King James himself a very graphic account of this process, by which the young man put his pedigree and his blazon in his pocket, and set up his booth and sold his stuffs until the lucky day when he could cock his beaver once more with the best, and assert the old pretensions of the stock from which he came. This national tendency shows itself perhaps for the last time with bewildering effect in the black lists of the Fifteen and the Forty-five, where a number of names, "fifth son of the laird of Drumthwacket," "seventh

son of Armiger of Tullieveolan," though each but the other day a builder of houses or sawyer of wood in Edinburgh, appears suddenly as a soldier and a gentleman among the victims of the forlorn-hope.

We will not attempt to dive into these depths with the usual industry of the biographer. The name of Blackwood has had considerable illustration both in the past and in our own age. From Adam the Scholar in the sixteenth century to her Majesty's late representative in France, the Marquis of Dufferin, the race, never very largely extended, has honour enough with which to plume itself. The name came originally, as we are proud to think so many notable families have come, from Fife, where it flourished in earlier days near the town, once a regal seat, of Dunfermline. The particular branch from which the Edinburgh Blackwoods sprang had, in the person of a well-to-do burgess of Edinburgh, the ill-fortune, which half of Scotland shared, to be ruined by the terrible fate of the enterprise of Darien, and was thus reduced to comparative poverty. From that period the family records are vague, until the name was revived by the founder of a house which has had so much to do with the great efflorescence of literature in the early part of this century as to figure among the limited list, confined to three or four only, of the Great Publishers who have given a special development to that much-abused but often important profession.

William Blackwood was born in Edinburgh on the 20th November 1776: and the period of his youth and early manhood was thus one in which Edinburgh was at its highest glory as a centre of intellectual life and influence. Scotland then was much more widely

separated than now from the other, larger, but not more distinct capital and metropolis of the south. The University of Edinburgh flourished greatly, not perhaps as it does now, by monster classes making a Scottish chair one of the prizes in the world of learning; but by the fame, which was European, of many of its teachers, and the large invasion of pupils of higher rank and greater pretensions than the youth of Edinburgh to partake the instructions which gave an intellectual stimulus beyond their immediate sphere of action to half the world. There were thus brought together many of the men who swayed and were born to sway the conquering race of the world, the united but various peoples whom it sometimes vexes our little Scotland, which has contributed so much to its force, to consent to hear identified among the heathen as "English," —a whimsical yet by no means unreal, though we fear inevitable, grievance. She has always had plenty of revenges upon the more abundant neighbour who, for general purposes, has swallowed up in his, like a husband with his wife, an equally dignified and considerable, if not so wealthy, name. She has never been without her large share in actuating the policy of the co-partnership; and in those days she moulded the minds of almost all the budding statesmen of the time, English as well as Scottish. Even now, when everything tends towards London, Edinburgh preserves a very distinct stamp of her own; but in those days she was as individual and distinct as Paris or Vienna. That time has had abundant record. The great professors, the judges, the doctors, the wits and humorists of the Parliament House, and,

above all, the quaint and highly coloured background of the ancient ladies and gentlemen, who still lived, as their ancestors had done, in the stately houses of the Canongate, and scoffed at all the world—with tender bursts of romance, and all the tales and wonders of family history, pathetic and tragical as well as ridiculous, coming in between—have had such historians as few cities could emulate. To have had one such as Walter Scott himself is enough to satisfy any appetite for fame. We will not attempt to tell anything of this story, or to depict anew a region and a period which have had the full honours of portraiture from the best hands. Our sphere is a different one, not in the tall houses of Mrs Margaret Bethune Baliol and her kind, but on levels of social comfort, fresher if less picturesque, and alive with so much stir of rising activity and enterprise that they add a chapter scarcely less interesting to the animated history of so remarkable a town.

Since the period when literature became a recognisable agent in national life, the capital of Scotland has been one of the centres from which that inner current flowed most strongly; and the Bookseller has held an interesting place in her annals. The eighteenth century, in all the glory of the Augustan age, brought this profession, "the Trade" *par excellence*, into higher development: and from the days when Allan Ramsay, that brave wig-maker and poet, began the issue of brochures and ballads, which he himself produced to make the business more simple, at the shop in the High Street which is still distinguished by his name, it has become an important link between the different classes, giving a common ground

of meeting to the writer and the reader, the man who had something to say and the many men who desired nothing better than to listen. He is the first we know of who made his shop an agreeable lounge for clever persons, where professors and wits and scholars from the College and Parliament House, and lairds and lords from the country, who loved a new book, might drop in to talk and turn over such new publications as found their way to the North, and where strangers belonging to what was called the Republic of Letters were received with enthusiasm. The smiling master of the place was no Jacob Tonson, nor was there a Grub Street, so far as appears, in the Scots capital. On the contrary, the fashion of the time was to consider literature something too fine and sacred to be produced for money. Jeffrey himself, so much later, had an apologetic air when he suggested the £10 a-sheet, which was a mere "acknowledgment," not to insult the divine fire by even a possibility that it could be brought down from heaven for a price. The early Edinburgh booksellers were men who themselves dabbled in that craft of which they had all the loftier opinion because of what they would have called their "trifling with the Muses." Creech and Smellie, two of the first of those booksellers, the latter a printer besides, wrote Fugitive Pieces, of the most elegant, moral, and sentimental tendency: some of which may have appeared in the 'Lounger' or 'Mirror,' two mild imitations of the 'Spectator,' under the conduct of Henry Mackenzie, the most superlative of literary leaders, of whom Edinburgh was reverentially proud—the Man of Feeling, as he was devoutly

called from his earliest production. The Man of Feeling belonged to the aristocracy of letters, Creech to the aristocracy of trade. The latter was in the Town Council, and was eagerly bent on the renovation and embellishment of Edinburgh.

> "Auld Reekie aye he keepit tight,
> An' trig an' braw:
> But now they'll busk her like a fright—
> Willie's awa'!"

was the mournful prophecy of Burns as to what would happen when the genial bookseller, his crony and patron, came to the end of his career.

> "The brethren o' the Commerce Chaumer
> May mourn their loss wi' dolefu' clamour;
> He was a dictionar an' grammar
> Amang them a';
> I fear they'll now mak' mony a stammer—
> Willie's awa'."

In the autobiography of Archibald Constable, Mr Creech is described as "standing on the steps that led to his shop, as was his fashion, along with a number of other gentlemen who used there daily to associate"; and he gave breakfasts at which all the *literati* were entertained, and still more convivial parties, at which that same Ayrshire ploughman, Robert Burns, who had so dazzled and bewildered Edinburgh, enjoyed himself more than in the drawing-rooms. Indeed all the booksellers were fond of entertaining, and hospitality was the order of the day. They loved above all to bring a few of the great men together, and triumph over their social superiority by something more telling and attractive still, a distinction which no territorial designation nor

any title could give,—the power of being able to communicate a novel sensation, to read a manuscript which was a mystery, and to set a fine scene of fiction, or a masterpiece of poetry, before their guests' dazzled and delighted eyes.

This was the condition of "the Trade" in Edinburgh when Archibald Constable and William Blackwood, "friends in youth," as the son of the former congratulates himself, though so much separated afterwards, began their career—Constable being by a few years in advance of his future rival. The first was a country lad from Fife; but Blackwood had the advantage of being Edinburgh born, and keen to all the traditions of the historic town. His father died early, we may suppose without having had time to make much provision for his family; but there is never any note of early want, or indeed undue pressure of any kind, in the history of the little household, three well-trained, well-dispositioned sons living under the guardianship of their mother—which soon turned, as they grew up into manhood, into a kind and watchful care of her on the part of her boys, the most fitting and beautiful development of such a relationship. There are no details, however, of young Blackwood's education or schools in the scanty rem nants of family tradition. He began his apprenticeship at fourteen, so that there was not much time for school-training, nor probably was it very necessary. Such a man as he was afterwards to be educates himself unconsciously, by much reading, and that close observation unawares which furnishes the mind without betraying even to the possessor the origin of the stores which gather there. He was apprenticed in

1790 to a firm of booksellers, Messrs Bell & Bradfute — whose name still remains over premises in a lower storey of one of those tallest of old houses on the rising ground between the Old Edinburgh and the New, though the original firm must long since have melted away. Their premises at first were in Parliament Square, beside the courts of law with the judges and advocates, and near the College with all its learned professors. With many of these great personages the boy would be familiar as they came in on their passage from the quickly growing crescents and squares of the New Town to the Parliament House and the University—to turn over the new books and discuss them, dropping at the same time many a seed of instruction, as successfully into a young mind in a bookseller's shop as into those more directly under their sway.

Here the lad worked out his indentures diligently, with all the instincts of a man born to advancement, unconsciously laying by many a suggestion and experience for use in his after-career—going cheerfully home at night to his mother and the society of his brothers, one older and one younger than himself. Games were not in those days what they are now. No doubt he would play golf now and then in a foursome on the Bruntsfield Links, which were then free and open ground, not restrained and limited by any girdle of villas. But even golf had not the ascendant which it holds in our days, and the boys would play only an occasional match on a Saturday afternoon or in the long lingering light of a June evening. The long strolls that young citizens love, especially those who have it in their power to lose themselves on misty

mountain slopes, or encounter the pleasing risk of a broken neck on the giant crags within reach of their homes, were a still more frequent amusement; and the boys would roam the Pentlands over, or wonder and wander in Roslin Chapel and the leafy depths of Hawthornden, as Scott did with his companions. And they would read and read, and train themselves in some more ambitious branch of knowledge for which they had not had time at school, in the long evenings of winter under the satisfied eyes of the mother, thankful to see that her sons thought of something better than play. We hear of no heroic attempts at self-culture like that of an earlier bookseller of Edinburgh, one of William Blackwood's predecessors, who managed to attend the lectures in the College in the intervals of his work, and of whom it is told that "the printing-office in which he served being within the precincts of the College, he generally continued at work till he heard the bell ring for lecture, when he immediately laid down his composing-stick, shifted his coat, ran off with his note-book under his arm, and returned to his work immediately after lecture." Young Blackwood, with the strong, practical good sense which distinguished him, was probably aware intuitively that doses of knowledge taken in this way, without leisure to digest and apply them, seldom came to much; whereas sound and complete understanding of a subject within the immediate range of life and duty was the most solid foundation upon which a man could build his life who meant to thrive and do well, and to waste none of his energies on unproductive labours.

We are not told, however, how he took that turn

towards old books which occupied so much of the earlier portion of his life, and introduced him to many of the friends of his after-progress. Bibliomania must have been in the air, one of the many revivals of that fertile period; for Constable, too, a little earlier, had entered upon his very active career in the same way. The Book-hunter had arisen, a new and interesting, if rather dusty, kind of sportsman, whose fury of the chase was boundless, and led him everywhere into much more intricate recesses than those of the woods and fields. Most people of literary habits are aware what an entrancing pursuit that is, and what a bond of union it makes between persons of the most different pursuits and attainments. And while this gave an impulse towards the study of old books, the more difficult science of the new was being attained less consciously in the ordinary routine of his life. Young Blackwood had begun at a very early age to study, and compare, and learn what was really curious and valuable, keeping his eyes and his ears open to all that was done and said by Messrs Bell & Bradfute's important customers: over which volumes the great men of the College pored, and which the general public tossed aside in their lighter examination: till he learned to know, without in the least knowing what he was learning, that astute distinction between what will be popular and what will not, which he possessed so strongly in after-life, and which descended to his sons after him—a rare and invaluable gift. This faculty is not a thing which depends on mere literary perception and taste, for sometimes the public will prefer the best and sometimes the worst, and very frequently indeed picks up something be-

tween the two, by some fantastic rule of selection which never has been fathomed by any man but a heaven-born publisher. When the young man had become independent and at liberty to follow his own instincts, public taste was safeguarded by the unquestionable reign of Scott, which nobody could gainsay, and against which criticism was of as little avail as the spray against a rock. But the very greatness of Scott, and the romance of his sudden development and his great semi-transparent secret, produced a general vividness of expectation in the mind of the age of other triumphs that might be to come. And the gift of discernment was never more wanted than at a time when new codes were forming, and there were audacious critics who did not fear to crack a joke upon the Man of Feeling, or even doubt the infallibility of Alison on Taste.

As soon as he had finished his apprenticeship, which was in 1797, young Blackwood was engaged by Messrs Mundell & Co.—a publishing firm in Edinburgh, which has not attained general fame, though we hear that its after-failure created almost a panic in "the Trade," and brought down several smaller houses — as the agent and manager of a branch establishment which it proposed to set up in Glasgow. It does not seem to have attained much success in what was at that time by no means a literary city; but one of its transactions is recorded, in which we should be glad to think our young agent had been directly employed. Mundell & Co. were the publishers who bought from Thomas Campbell the poem which first brought him into notice, the "Pleasures of Hope"—the price given, it is said, being "fifty printed copies" of the work,

and no more. This, no doubt, would be considered a smart bargain in those days, when poetry was by no means a drug in the market; but we doubt much whether any publisher nowadays would give the value of fifty printed copies for a poem on the Pleasures of any moral quality whatsoever. During young Blackwood's residence in Glasgow he is believed to have attended lectures in the College there, though without attempting to graduate. The first letter of his which we have met with is one quoted by Mr Thomas Constable in his Memorials of his father, and shows how, in the midst of his other occupations, the pursuits of a book-hunter were taking a foremost place. The young man was then twenty-two. He assures his correspondent that it is no trouble, but a pleasure, "to pick up books," and sends him the following list of some of his acquisitions, acquired it would seem on Constable's account. The date is Glasgow College, 10th September 1798, though whether this date denotes his presence there as a student, or that Messrs Mundell's office was within the University precincts, we are unable to say.

I have got a book very much in your way, entitled Ane Dialog betwix Experience and ane Courteour, Compylit by Schir David Lyndesay, Imprentet at the Command and Expensis of Dr Machabeus in Copenhagen. At the end there is a date, 1522. It is a small quarto black-letter. It is certainly a great curiosity, and though I was not sure of its value I paid pretty high for it. You will probably know it. I have also got a copy of Nicol Burne's Disputation, Par. 1581, likewise Holingshed's Chronicles, black-letter, fol., Lond. 1586; it is rather gone in the binding, and wants the last leaf of the Index, but it is otherways clean enough: say what you would give for any of these. I have also two or three other things

which I could send you at the following prices: Sir Thomas More's Works, 2 vol. fol., black-letter, fair, J. Cawood, Lond. 1557, 19s. The Works of W. Tyndal, J. Frith, and Dr Barnes, black-letter, fol., fair, John Daye, Lond. 1573, 9s. (You will see both of these in White or Egerton's last catalogues.) Home on Bleaching, 8vo, Edin. 1756, 7s. 6d. Pardovan's Collection, 8vo, Edin. 1770, 6s. 6d. Reynolds' Triumphs of God's Revenge against Murther, fol., Lond. 1640, 5s. 6d.; Gildæ, de excidio et conquestu Britanniæ, etc., epistola, 18mo, J. Daius, Lond. 1568. This, I believe, is a scarce little book, but I cannot see it in any catalogue, so I leave the price of it to yourself.

This would seem to be about the beginning of his independent dealings, and the young man was no doubt picking up knowledge along with the experimental volumes. But they show at least how his mind and his thoughts were turning. It is curious to note the mixture of new and old, of the humbler and the more ambitious enterprises, which was so much a matter of course in those days. The bookseller of the beginning century would not seem to have been aware that the sale of old books was in any respect a less worthy work than the production of the new. He stepped from one to another with the most easy simplicity. Constable was still buying and selling libraries, and undertaking their regulation and arrangement, when he began the publication of the Waverley Novels. It is a strange conjunction.

William Blackwood came back to Edinburgh, after a year's absence, a fresh-coloured lively youth, twenty-two, not averse to talk, full of notions of his own—as likely a lad as could be met with in the little busy world of intellectual Edinburgh, where there was a great deal of liveliness and much talk, and unusual intercourse among all classes on the subject of books.

He went back at first to his old employers, and there resumed his work as before, though with his eyes intent on every opening, and ready to embrace the first that offered. It was probably at this period that his friendly employers, who had known him so long and found him so admirable an apprentice, gave young Blackwood an introduction which was of the deepest importance in his after-life. This was to Mrs Bradfute, a relation of one of the firm, who had at the time a young lady resident with her for the purpose of attending classes in Edinburgh. This has always been an occupation much followed by lonely ladies in Edinburgh—there having been for many years, as there still continues to be, excellent instruction to be obtained in this way, without the confinement, and, as our forefathers thought, the doubtful associations of what was called a "boarding-school"—a place where the best that was produced was a sort of Lydia Languish, and "a boarding-school Miss," a well-known title of contempt. Miss Janet Steuart, the daughter of Mr Steuart of Carfin in Lanarkshire, was probably a young lady of higher social pretensions than William Blackwood; but the lady to whose care she was intrusted took no heed, apparently, of these punctilios, and William Blackwood soon became a constant visitor and attendant. Miss Steuart must have been in her young days a stately brunette, with the abundant black hair which is so much more rare nowadays than it used to be, her somewhat dark but clear complexion tempered by blue eyes, as if she had been an Irishwoman or Spaniard, though we are not aware that there was any Milesian blood in her veins. The pair must have

formed a pleasant contrast to each other—for William was of light complexion and lively humour; while Janet was imposing in appearance, grave and caustic in wit, not given to enthusiasm, which was to him the breath of life. There are no dates nor other particulars in the little romance: we are only told that it did happen, and the manner in which it happened, through the agency of the old lady, who found her brother-in-law's young assistant a very agreeable visitor, always ready to attend upon the ladies in the evenings, and coming in with all the news and a new book from time to time.

This would naturally make the young man still more anxious to find some way of beginning for himself and pushing his fortune. Perhaps it was his eagerness on this subject which prompted young Blackwood's next step in life, which was the formation of a partnership with a certain Robert Ross, "a bookseller and bookseller's auctioneer"—a description which explains some of the early catalogues put forth by William Blackwood. Some of these are bound up in a volume of the more dignified and important catalogues published by Blackwood himself in later days. The books are described as to be sold at 7 o'clock P.M. for several consecutive nights; and the sales seem to have been prefaced by some sort of feast, like the dinner which, in the higher circles of the trade, formed a preliminary to the periodical sales of "remainders" and other stock. Blackwood, however, does not seem to have liked the auctioneer business, and the partnership of Ross & Blackwood lasted only one year. He acquired no doubt a little

additional experience by the aid of these sales, in which the country bookseller, coming up to Edinburgh to replenish his humble stock, rubbed shoulders with the book-collector, who knew that a rare work was now and then to be acquired in this way. The miniature which forms the frontispiece of this volume, and in which our young bookseller appears in powder, with the finest of blue coats and cambric neckerchiefs, represents a personage who would have been rather out of place, we should imagine, in the atmosphere of the auction room.

After this Blackwood started for London, where he went to the establishment of Mr Cuthill, "famous for his catalogues," with whom he remained for three years—making himself acquainted with all the London methods of work, and especially, no doubt, with this matter of compiling catalogues, for which already he had showed so much aptitude. Many years afterwards, when his own position and fortunes were assured, he sent his eldest son to go through all the drudgery of a clerk in a London bookseller's business, which proves that he thought himself to have profited by it. There is little information to be gleaned about Cuthill. If he taught his pupil anything, it was probably the art of cataloguing, which in its turn led the young man's thoughts back again to his old fancy for that class of literature concerning which catalogues are most interesting—the old books which are loved not by common readers, but by men of peculiar tastes and more recondite studies, among whom the young man was eager to find a footing. He had dreams already of publishing, of finding some man of great

genius to attach himself to, and of making the welkin ring again with the name of Blackwood, then so humble and little known.

We do not know if his private affairs had at this point reached to an acute stage hurrying a decision, or if he found that he had as much of Cuthill and the other methods of London as would serve his purpose. At all events in 1804, he returned definitely to Edinburgh, and launched himself upon the world in an independent establishment on the South Bridge, which had the advantage of being exactly opposite the College—the best position possible for the sale of old books as well as of new. In this place Blackwood remained for a number of years. He not only sold old books but bought them, and undertook commissions to arrange and classify and value gentlemen's libraries. Constable had begun in a similar way not many years before. It seems to have been one of the shortest cuts to fortune. The book-hunters had suddenly developed in English and Scottish circles, often in the most unlikely places, hungry for their prey. Heber was prowling about Edinburgh in every place that promised discovery of a forgotten volume; and Dibdin in England was busy with his work on the purchase of old books and their value and classification.

While these changes were going on Blackwood had attained the age of twenty-eight, and would seem to have also risen to such modest prosperity in his business as made marriage possible. And in the beginning of 1805 he seems to have found an opportunity of offering his hand and his rising fortunes to the young lady who had secured his early admiration. The letter in which she replied to his proposal has

happily been found among the masses of old letters put into my hands, and its old-fashioned dignity is well worthy of quotation :—

April 12, 1805.

SIR,—Yours of the 2d inst. I only received on Monday, and return you many thanks for your kind inquiries after my Father, who I am happy to say continues to get better, which affords me much pleasure. I certainly have thought of what passed between us when I saw you last, and your candour demands mine in return. I therefore frankly acknowledge I am disposed to think favourably of your proposal, but it must rest upon a better acquaintance. We know too little of each other to enter into any engagement. I am much afraid you have in a great measure formed your opinion of me from Mrs Bradfute, whose good wishes I know I am so happy as to enjoy, and whose friendship I highly esteem. I could not bring my mind to write to you without telling my brother, who told me he could give me no advice, knowing nothing of you; but to act with candour if I thought you had done so to me, and to let nothing but my own comfort direct my choice.—I remain your most ob.,

JANET STEUART.

This moderate encouragement had no doubt been followed by opportunities for the "better acquaintance" which Miss Steuart prudently desired; for in October of the same year the pair were married.

Mrs Blackwood was brought home to her own house on her wedding-day in a postchaise, the bridal pair being accompanied, as was the remarkable fashion of the time, by the bridesmaid her sister, and the best man. The house was an ordinary one in an Edinburgh street on "the South-side"; but within a year the young couple removed to a house of their own in one of the leafy roads of Newington, with a wide view from the windows over the fair surrounding country,

a pleasant garden, and those large rooms and airy passages which are the charm of Edinburgh houses. This dwelling, their first possession, in which the Blackwoods settled before the birth of their first child, was large enough to receive and contain the numerous family of boys and girls who made haste to follow. The pleasantness of that home is proved with a very tender pathos by the many pilgrimages made to it still (1895) by the last survivor,[1] Miss Isabella Blackwood, to whom the image of "my Father" still seems to smile benignant over the mists of eighty years.

To this house very shortly after there came another inmate in Mrs Blackwood's sister, Miss Elizabeth Steuart, between whom and the young wife there existed one of those lifelong unions which are often almost the closest of any ties. She was, like her sister, a woman of somewhat severe and caustic wit, a bustling housewife, a keen critic, always ready with the sharp edge of an uncompromising opinion or the pungent wisdom of an old Scots proverb: but, under this veil of strong character and perfect independence of mind, possessed of an absolute devotion to the family which she had thus adopted and made her own. None of the disadvantages which sometimes accompany the presence of such a domestic spectator seem to have existed in her case, though she always spoke her mind freely, and was no ministering angel

[1] Since the above sentence was written Miss Isabella Blackwood has ended her long life, to the heartfelt regret of the present writer, who had hoped to present to so old a friend, and one from whom so much information was derived, this record of those most dear to her. No one more faithful to her family or more concerned for its credit and reputation ever lived, and the scenes and surroundings of her youth were always nearer to her heart than anything else in life.

in the sentimental sense of the word, but a stout-hearted and sagacious old Scots gentlewoman, given, as they all were, to strong statements of the right and wrong of every question. Till their latest day the Blackwoods always quoted "my aunt" with the respect due to a domestic oracle, if with something also of that affectionate banter which is so often appropriate to the best-beloved member of the band of household potentates.

The family opinion of the qualities of the young wife are expressed with great propriety by Mrs Steuart of Overton, an aunt, whose letter would seem to have followed them on their journey home, thanking the bride for her "kind remembrance," which would seem to have taken the form of wedding-cake and gloves, a gift which it was the Scots custom at a marriage to send to all friends.

> I think your prospect of happiness is fair [says this lady with caution], and I fondly hope your affections as a Wife will not fall short of those as a Daughter, in which case your better-half will have reason to congratulate himself on making such a choice. Do write me soon and give me *all* the news. You know what a treat even a little bit of scandal is, in a long winter night.

This letter is addressed to Mrs W. Blackwood "*with a cheese*," which no doubt—"a specimen of my dairy"—was her wedding present to the young *ménage*. Another Mrs Steuart, the sister-in-law of Mrs Blackwood, sends a year later with some humour her kind messages on the first great event which took place in the Newington house, the birth of Alexander Blackwood, the first of the family. Mrs Steuart writes congratulating her sister-in-law, or rather her

sister-in-law's husband, on this auspicious event, "which gives us much genuine satisfaction."

"Say to her from me," continues this experienced lady, "that by this time I daresay she agrees in my Opinion that *that* business is no Joke." She adds a very pretty expression of feeling which shows how mutually serviceable to each other were the different branches of the family:—

> I can make every allowance, my dear Sir, for your silence, and I am happy to hear how throng [busy] you are—nothing like a man in business being compleatly occupied; long may it continue so. I have got a full and particular account of my youngsters. I want words to express how much I am oblidged by your Fatherly care of our Children, and if any of them disobey you they will lose my favour; also, your Brother Mr Thomas, who, I understand, makes them read on Sunday nights: it is a friendly office, my dear Sir, to imbibe in the young mind a sense of Religion and Duty—and a consciousness of so doing is a noble reward to a good heart.

On this pleasant picture of the pleasant house and all the many ties that were gathering about the new family it is agreeable to pause, before plunging into those records of business which became more complicated and more important day by day. There is every proof of the success of that business, and of the prosperous development of its centre on the South Bridge, where the young master was, as Mrs Steuart and we are glad to hear, so *throng*. In this quiet period William Blackwood was making for himself many friends, and gaining recognition everywhere as a safe and steady man of business, not given to flights of fancy, but full of enthusiasm for literature—which is a thing we are but little accustomed to look for nowa-

days in the new members of "the Trade"—and with a distinct opinion and judgment of his own: while his family life continued full of sunshine and a benignant atmosphere of kindness. He showed himself, as we have seen, from the beginning, the most genial member of his wife's family. He was fatherly to the Carfin children sent in to Edinburgh for their education, and the kindest of brothers to the lady who, for all the rest of her life, formed part of his household. His own mother lived for many years after his marriage, and those of her other sons—in serene old age, in a smaller house than that which she had occupied in that heyday of a mother's life when her sons were still under her wing: but still gathering her children and her children's children round her on all the anniversaries, and presiding in her retirement over the general family life in a way most satisfactory to human sentiment. Her son William never failed day by day to pause at his mother's door as he went to and returned from his business, bringing her the news, consulting her on all that occurred, filling the monotony of the days of old age with a constant thread of happy anticipation, and pleasant moments of confidential talk. It is impossible to imagine a more perfect exemplification of the kind natural round of duty and family affection, no one left out, no sense of neglect possible to even the most retired member of the family. From her favourite seat in the window of her parlour, chosen for that reason, the old lady could see her William's children coming and going to their first school; and morning and evening watched for her son's footsteps, secure that, however *throng* he might be, these visits were the last things which he would

neglect. This was the cheerful background of his life for many years.

Meantime an increasing number of book-hunters and others gathered round the young bookseller. And there began to be visitors whose names are enough to stir our hearts, Walter Scott chief among them: and visions of better things to come irradiated the dustiness of the old books, suggesting fresh new ones, damp and delightful, from the press, and fortune and reputation within reach (almost) of the young man's eager hand. We hear of no special difficulty, however, or struggle in the career of one who established himself so early in all the responsibilities of life, and who seems to have been so completely independent without the aid of patronage or connection. There was from the beginning plenty, and a liberal provision for all wants, in the young household in Salisbury Road; but the progress of business was quiet, and there was no rush for success nor any sensational strain at a new chance, until the steady advancement culminated in a crisis of which William Blackwood was prepared and ready to take advantage. There were rivals in the same field a step before him in the race, and straining every nerve to keep that place, especially in respect to London agencies and other external signs of prosperity. They were all somewhat rash in the rush of new energy which had revolutionised "the Trade," bold in their ventures, and entertaining a faith in literature which has been much subdued, we fear, since then, or at least turned into very different channels. It was the moment of a wonderful new flood of genius over the

face of the country, and this had been accompanied by a generation of booksellers, scarcely accustomed as yet to the larger name of publisher, and not quite certain of the powers of that Pegasus which they were eagerly endeavouring on all sides to yoke to their private chariots. But they overvalued rather than undervalued his powers. The Ballantynes, who have a fictitious importance through their connection with Scott, and Constable, who has left autobiographical notes of his own progress, throw much light upon the eagerness with which their eyes were directed to everybody who showed any signs of literary merit. Such a discovery as Scott, such an adventure as the 'Edinburgh Review,' disclosing in the heart of the small capital a very nest of men capable of entertaining and dazzling the whole world, went a little to the heads of these new men in the new business which for the moment seemed about to take its place at the top of all commercial affairs.

It is a common belief in the literary world that publishers are the most grasping of middlemen, eager only to have the lion's share of the profits. But in those days there was a certain spirit of daring and romance in "the Trade." The Revival of Literature was like the opening of a new mine: it was more than that, a sort of manufactory out of nothing, to which there seemed no limit. You had but to set a man of genius spinning at that shining thread which came from nowhere, which required no purchase of materials or "plant" of machinery, and your fortune was made. We remember that, later, Constable went gravely to the Bank of England to negotiate a loan upon the sole security of the unwritten books to be drawn from the

brain of the author of 'Waverley.' This confidence had seemed justified by long experience, and it was the very breath of the eager booksellers, on tiptoe to find in the first young gentleman who came into their shop with a manuscript in his pocket another Scott, or perhaps a Byron, ready to take the world by storm. "Abandoning the old timid and grudging system, he stood out as the general patron and payer of all promising publications, and confounded not only his rivals in trade but his very authors by his unheard-of prices," says Lord Cockburn, speaking of Constable. "Ten, even twenty guineas a-sheet for a review, £2000 or £3000 for a single poem, and £1000 for two philosophical dissertations, drew authors out of their dens, and made Edinburgh a literary mart famous with strangers, and the pride of its own citizens." It was in one great case a sort of madness while it lasted, and brought its natural catastrophe: but the result in others was much prosperity and success, and in the first stage it stimulated every brain, and half convinced the world that Poetry, Romance, Philosophy, and even Criticism, were the first crafts and the most profitable in the world.

Of all the young booksellers who thus set out almost at the same moment, 1808, to benefit their country and develop literature,—among whom might also be reckoned the new firm of John Ballantyne & Co., a short-lived competitor, though its possession of the favour of Scott and a large stock of unsaleable books made it for as long as it lasted a stumbling-block in everybody's way,—Blackwood was the only man who may be said permanently to have mastered fortune. He was rash like the others, but not so

rash; and though the romance and excitement of literary assault and attack mounted also for a moment to his brain, it was but as a temporary ebullition. There is no trace of anything of the kind in the calm days of the beginning century. Perhaps, though it seems a strange thing to say, the fact that he did not succeed in establishing that connection with Scott which was the aim of every man's ambition at the time, and which, had he succeeded, we cannot but feel might have saved Scott from much of the tragedy of his life—had also much to do with the steadiness of Blackwood's brain and fortunes. For Scott was a discomposing influence in his very greatness and naturalness, bringing with him to others a sort of moral vertigo from the very steadiness of his own mind. A man to whom nothing is impossible, who only buckles to his work more bravely when it is most crushing, and does not know what it is to fail in courage or in strength, is apt to demoralise all about him.

However, all high-flying enterprises were still far off at the time when the South Bridge was the centre of Blackwood's life and fortunes. One of his first publications was one of which he was also the author—a catalogue of his own books, amounting to more than fifteen thousand volumes, so admirably executed that it attracted immediate attention, and brought him not only orders but the most friendly letters, from all sides. It shows that his knowledge of old books must have been very considerable, and afforded in its succinct descriptions and note of prices an admirable guide to the book-collector. From this point of view it was received with much interest by the many well-known people to whom he seems to have

sent it, on its issue. Among the correspondents who spring into sight around him after this publication, all anxious to have some book or other from his stores, some of them enclosing long lists, there are one or two whose names have still power to touch the reader. From their letters we may quote one from Sir Walter Scott, charming in its pleasant gleam of character. He ought not to indulge in books, the great Magician knows—but still——

ABBOTSFORD, 21*st May* 1812.

DEAR SIR,—I am greatly obliged to you for your attention in forwarding your curious and interesting catalogue. I am here ruining myself with plumbing and building, so that adding to my library is in fact burning the candle at both ends. But I am somewhat comforted by observing that the increased value of books has very nearly doubled the prime cost of my little collection, and proved me a wise man when I had much reason to account myself a fool. I therefore subjoin an order for some articles, to which I may probably make additions on coming to Edinburgh; for few people except princes can afford to marry or buy books without making their own eyes the arbiters of the bargain.—I am, with best thanks for your attention, dear sir, yours very faithfully, WALTER SCOTT.

It is evident from this that Sir Walter was already on terms of some acquaintance with the active bookseller. The list of books—I do not remember that there are any of special interest—is written at the back of the letter, which is thus inscribed: "Given under my hand this day of my flitting from Ashestiel"—a historical note which goes to one's heart. He must have paused to write it, his heart all aglow with the pleasure of that entry into Abbotsford which he was about to make—Abbotsford, where all was to come to an end.

Another letter in the same collection is from the well-known bibliographer, Dibdin, who also "encloses a list of some articles which I hope I shall be fortunate enough to obtain from your collection," and inquires anxiously which will be the safest and most reasonable method of conveyance. "I suppose the Waggon," says the careful book-lover, unwilling to trust his precious books to the mercies of the Smack. "I have just received your catalogue," he says, "and without compliment it does you great credit—an immense collection!" though he regrets that the Miscellanea are so highly priced; then having done justice to his correspondent's business, he introduces his own:—

I enclose you a prospectus of the sumptuous and truly valuable work on which I am now engaged—the subscriptions to which fill rapidly. All the l. c. are bespoken; and when I inform you that the Bibliomania—of which 750 copies were printed—has been out of print this month (never to be reprinted), you will allow I am neither sanguine nor precipitate when I conclude that the present work, of which a much smaller impression will be published, will have a similar fate within the same period. You may procure me subscribers if you feel no disposition to embark in it yourself. To you each copy will be £3, 18s. 6d.

On the same subject Mr John Murray writes the first letter I have found from him, May 1812: "Your Catalogue I hear incessantly praised by Heber as the head of many others; it does great credit to you in many respects. I am just going to the Duke of Roxburghe's to see his Boccaccio sold; a thousand, fifteen hundred, and even two thousand guineas are spoken of." Thus it is evident that in the midst of their large new transactions they all took an interest in

old books, a fine taste we fear scarcely shared by the profession now. The Duke of Roxburghe was a great book-collector, and had been Constable's special patron when he too was a dealer in old books. We are told by another authority that Blackwood's catalogue was the first in which the books were classified, and that it continues to be an authority in the present day.

The first event, however, of radical importance in Blackwood's life was his appointment as the agent of John Murray, not then of Albemarle Street, the great London publisher, whose alliance all the Edinburgh publishers sought, and who had tantalised one firm after another by the temporary possession of his confidence. His first connection had been with Constable, whose London agent he was; but this connection being broken, the Ballantynes, who had succeeded to his favour, disgusted the great London potentate by their disorderly ways, to which, with his more prudent standards and sense of the dignity of his own position as a sort of Metropolitan and High Priest of the Trade, he objected strongly. They drew bills upon him which Murray coldly returned, with a statement that he never did business in that way, and a few words about the imprudence of going beyond their capital. The Ballantynes in revenge did not offer Murray a share in the 'Lady of the Lake' when they published that poem, and this greatly stung and mortified the London publisher:—

You cannot suppose that my estimation of Mr Scott's genius can have rendered me indifferent to my exclusion from a share in the 'Lady of the Lake'? [he says with much indignation.] I mention this [he adds], as well to testify that I am not indifferent to this conduct in you as to point it out to you that

if you mean to withhold from me that portion which you command of the advantages of our connection, you must surely mean to resign any that might arise from me. The sole agency for my publications in Edinburgh is worth, to any man who understands his business, £300; but this requires zealous activity and deference on one side, and great confidence on both, otherwise the connection cannot be advantageous or satisfactory to either party.

Having thus shaken off the Ballantynes, who were too hungry for money and bills to escape for long the grave disapproval of so serious and prudent a man of business, Mr Murray transferred his connection to Blackwood, then rising into note. Though he was no longer connected with Constable in business, Mr Murray was still on sufficiently confidential terms with his house to consult him on the subject of his new alliance. His letter is dated the 25th September 1811, and is the first distinct statement we have of the increasing value of Mr Blackwood's business and connection:—

I wish you would do me the favour to say if you think I have done well in inclining to Blackwood's proposal to be my agent. He does now and then get a book or two to throw in one's way; but really no other person does except your house, which gets all the rest. We should have had everything and done everything if it had not been for our unfortunate misunderstanding.

If already the young publisher was sufficiently established to be able *to throw a book or two in the way* of the cautious and careful London publisher, it proves that the progress he had made was very considerable indeed, and upon this ground of mutual support and backing up their connection began. The

relations of the publishers of that period, taking share in each other's enterprises, and setting their hopes of fortune on the same touch of good or evil chance, were very close ones, and perhaps, like blood-relationship, less conducive to peace than the more independent inter-position of men standing each on his own ground; but the intercourse between these new associates was for some time most cordial and friendly. Murray hastened to communicate to Blackwood the wonderful terms upon which he stood with Byron, who was the great glory of London, as Scott was of Edinburgh; and when Blackwood in his turn had the triumph of securing, if but temporarily, the author of 'Waverley,' he made a point of procuring for his correspondent a share in that much-coveted honour. The curious intrigues, conspiracies, checks and counter-checks of these changing combinations of publishers, scarcely as yet assuming that name—for they all call themselves booksellers—may be perceived in the records of the Murrays and the Constables, already published. There can be no doubt that the politics of the 'Edinburgh Review,' for instance, were obnoxious to many of its readers and even to some of its writers, and that Murray had long contemplated the establishment of a rival Review. But it was the fact that the 'Edinburgh,' having been confided to him as its London publisher, was then summarily taken out of his hands by the establishment by the Constables of a branch of their business in London, which sharply decided him to lose no time in setting up that other—a periodical very anxiously and carefully ushered into the world, but which did not command the sudden

and brilliant success of its predecessor, though brought into being with much more care, capital, and foresight, and possessing writers quite as distinguished as those of the rival camp. Murray was a very steady fighter, very solid and immovable, standing like a tower; but he had nothing in him of the dare-devil, the reckless and dauntless spirit which at that period of literary history certainly seems to have suited the existing state of affairs better than the most carefully laid plans. The 'Edinburgh' had started gaily, taking all the risks with a temerity almost culpable; and so did the Magazine, of which Mr Blackwood had scarcely as yet begun to think. They were both Berserkers, wild riders of the North, incautious, daring, irresponsible: the 'Quarterly,' on the other hand, was respectable—if not always in utterance, at least in methods—from the beginning of its days, and observed all the rules of success; but did not, I think, make any commotion to speak of, even in an eagerly expectant world.

By this time our young bookseller had already begun to publish cautiously on his own account, the most conspicuous of his early publications being the 'Life of John Knox,' by the Rev. Thomas M'Crie,—a work which made much commotion in its day, and was one of the first of the publications of a new historical school, more pious, more reverential, less elegant and classical, than the works of Robertson and Blair; and starting from an altogether different point of view from that which regarded Queen Mary as a wronged heroine, and the Reformer as a fierce fanatic. M'Crie was a Scottish Dissenting minister, one of the Auld Licht upon which Burns was so

severe, and which recent Scots romancists have endeavoured to raise once more to popularity and the honours of the picturesque. No romance, however, was in the work of the new historian, which it is said was suggested by his own careful researches into the early history of the Scots Church, undertaken rather by way of clearing up the many schisms and divisions in his own primitive branch than with any greater aim. It was the first attempt to present Knox in the light of a statesman as well as a divine, and to estimate justly (if too favourably) his real influence upon Scotland. It was an important publication to be the first of the new publisher's undertakings, but it was one worthy of the zeal and enthusiasm with which he threw himself into literature. His eagerness to secure distinction for the authors with whom he was connected comes very clearly out in a correspondence which I find between Mr Blackwood and Dr Lee, afterwards Principal of Edinburgh University, but then occupying the same position in St Andrews, on the subject of an honorary degree for Mr M'Crie, which seemed to Blackwood the most flattering reward that could be obtained for the still young author,—who was not, however, it appears, of the same opinion, for there is an amusing letter of offended dignity from M'Crie, refusing the honour to which he had no right, in the true spirit of the Anti-Burgher.

The first of the band which was so soon to surround Blackwood and carry him into the greater tides of life, appears among the earliest of his connections. "The Ettrick boar," he writes to Murray in September 1814, "unfortunately left Edinburgh the day I ar-

rived." James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, had already published a volume of poetry, and had been heard of even in London. This son of the soil has had a curious fortune. He possessed a spark of undeniable genius; and certainly he had a distinct tune and melody of his own among the poetical pipings of the fields. But it fell to his lot to be caught up from the borders of his forest into the company of a number of men much more brilliant than himself—men who, without possessing his special quality, were in all ways more able, more capable, of higher intellect and infinitely higher training than he. The Shepherd never was in the least the half-inspired delightful talker which he appears in the 'Noctes': but he was a poet in his way, an echo of the inspiration of Burns, "trailing clouds of glory" from the inheritance of that one great Peasant-Poet, who seemed in those days to make it more possible to find poets among peasants than in any other class. The Shepherd is the first of the men with whom he had in future so much to do, who came visibly into William Blackwood's life. The beginning of what turned out to be a very long correspondence refers to the publication of 'The Queen's Wake,' and is addressed to Blackwood not as publisher, but as trustee or executor of a certain Mr Goldie, a minor publisher, who had died before the book could be brought out. Hogg suggests that half of the printed copies should be made over to him on condition that he should pay for paper and printing. This no doubt was his simple way of interpreting an agreement for half profits. "I am suffering," he says, "a double injury by having my principal work thus locked up from the public, it never having

been regularly published." There is a balance-sheet of the transaction between Goldie and Hogg enclosed with these old letters — by which it appears that Hogg received for the slim volume of poetry no less a sum than £245, a reward which a minor poet in our own day would certainly think no unsubstantial one.

It was not, however, until the year 1816 that Blackwood came out prominently in literary history, through the means of a remarkable and tantalising incident, which we shall fully relate in the following chapter, as it is one of which the right particulars have never been known,—the transaction by which he became for a moment the publisher of Scott, with intoxicating hopes of a transference to himself of the position previously secured by Constable—and the distinction of seeing his name on the title-page of the Waverley Novels, the thing most coveted by every publisher existing. In the meantime he had changed his establishment from the South Bridge to 17 Princes Street, an address soon made memorable as the head-quarters of a literary group unequalled in Edinburgh or within the limits of Great Britain. He was now not the agent of Murray only, but also of Messrs Cadell & Davies, in London, and had shaken from his fingers for ever the dusty traces of the old books. As the remarkable literary incident to which we have referred is too long to come in at the end of a chapter, we may here place, though it is in some degree anticipating our story, the account of one of those discoveries which publishers still are proud to make, and which brought a new novelist, who has proved a permanent distinction to her age and country, before the world.

It seems a little doubtful, from the tenor of his first letter, whether he was aware who the writer was that had sent him, as appears, a portion only of the MS. to which it refers; but it is plain that he had already acquired not only the gift of letter-writing, in which the house of Blackwood has always been strong, but much of that wise literary discrimination in which his descendants have rarely failed. There is a tone in this communication which will tantalise the literary aspirant of the present day with visions of what once were—though we believe only in occasional cases—the accents in which a publisher addressed an author. It is dated the 6th May 1817:—

Mr Blackwood now returns to the author the enclosed manuscript, which he has perused oftener than once with the highest delight. He feels not a little proud that such a writer should express a wish to receive any suggestions from him. The whole construction and execution of the work appear to him so admirable that it would almost be presumption in any one to offer corrections to such a writer. Mr B. begs to assure the author that unmeaning compliment is the furthest from his thoughts, and he flatters himself that at no distant period he will have the high delight of assuring the writer in person of the heartfelt sincerity of the opinion he has ventured to offer. Mr B. will not allow himself to think for one moment that there can be any uncertainty as to the work being completed. Not to mention his own deep disappointment, Mr B. would almost consider it a crime if a work possessing so much interest and instruction were not given to the world. The author is the only critic of whom Mr B. is afraid, and after what he has said he anxiously hopes that this Censor of the Press will speedily affix the imprimatur."

These words were addressed (though the writer as yet probably did not know it) to Miss Susan Ferrier, a lady full of wit and sense, in Scott's very circle, and well known as a delightful person to meet, though no

one had thought of attributing authorship to a lady in society, considered in those days to be protected, and superior to any wish of entering the arena of letters —or, indeed, any other. We may well imagine that there was no restraining the new author after this enthusiastic opinion, which was no "unmeaning compliment," and that the half-completed story was carried on with energy and satisfaction. About three weeks later it would appear that a second portion of the tale had been forwarded to him, and Mr Blackwood writes again:—

30th May 1817.

Mr Blackwood embraces the opportunity of returning the MS. to offer his warmest thanks to the author for the high enjoyment he has received from it. It is unnecessary for him to repeat how much he is flattered by his observations being considered as at all worthy of notice by one who is so far above his feeble praise, and who stands so little in need of criticism. Mr B. cannot forbear remarking how admirably the cold and selfish character of Lady Juliana continues to be sustained, as well as the fine contrast afforded by the sensitive and feeling heart of her devoted daughter. Every one has felt in youth the glow of enthusiasm so well portrayed in Mary; and any one who has ever associated with the English of a certain class will at once recognise in Dr Redgill the living portrait of hundreds, though never before hit off so well. The first paragraph of the second chapter is alike remarkable for its truth, brevity, and neatness. Mr B. hopes he will be excused for making these observations, which he has been tempted to make from the portion he now has before him being so small. If he had attempted to say what he felt on perusing the former part of the work, he fears he would have said too much for the author's patience, and at the same time would not have been able to do justice to his own feelings. He anxiously hopes that the author will not lag, but finish the work with all convenient speed. When it suits the author's conveniency Mr B. need not add how happy he would be to receive either a large or small portion of the MS.

The next letter of the series is written in the first person, and shows that the veil had been removed, and that Blackwood was now aware who his correspondent was. His admiration goes on increasing, and his desire—for which he is "quite impatient"—to "have it in my power to let others enjoy what I have enjoyed so much myself." "You are quite in the right spirit at present," he says; "I entreat you to go on, and to have no advisers but your own heart and feelings." There is in some of these remarks a curious resemblance to the style in which his son, fifty years after, executed the office of the genial critic and encouraging friend. "You are quite in the right spirit," *dans une bonne voie*, as the French painters say. Those of us, and the number is fast decreasing, to whom John Blackwood wrote on similar subjects in the fifties and sixties, will recognise with a smile and a sigh the accents of the son in those of the father.

'Marriage' was published in the beginning of the next year.

> I am almost sorry [Blackwood writes], when I ought to be glad, now that I send you the end. I have had more enjoyment and pleasure in the progress of your work for the last twelve months than I have ever had in any that have passed through my hands. I am now as impatient to have it fairly afloat as I was to have it concluded, being confident that there will only be one opinion of its merits.

The copyright of the book, or rather I think of the first edition, would seem to have been bought for £150—which was a very reasonable price for the new work of an unknown writer, of which the publisher had good hopes.

He was already established in Princes Street, in premises more adapted to his rising fortunes, when these negotiations were going on. The old books dropped out, the bookselling altogether became but an unimportant adjunct to his business, which was now plainly that of a publisher, and the establishing of his career in the lines which it was to follow till the termination of his life was now complete. And his household was flourishing and multiplying year by year. Already the eldest son Alexander was sufficiently grown to be sent, no doubt a proud messenger, riding into town upon his pony in the freedom of the holidays from the house in Newington, or more probably from the more important dwelling in the country, to which the family had already begun to migrate for the summer months. "He will ride out again with the sheet completed if you give him the manuscript. Do not mind my sending him out again, for I can perfectly spare him," writes the father, no doubt proud of the publisher in bud, on his pony in his holiday time, making acquaintance with the new author. The sons who were to carry on the work, so many of them in succession, were thus brought in early to lend an ornamental aid, and to cultivate that personal pride and glory in the work, as of a profession intermediary between the immortals and the ordinary world, which distinguished them all in later life.

That Blackwood very early showed the true discrimination of a literary critic is evident from an accidental letter to Miss Ferrier on the subject of another novel, evidently sent to him through her hands, his tone in respect to which is most flatteringly different from that which he used in speaking

of her own performance. He approved on the whole, and had "formed a high opinion of the talent displayed in it," and, "commercially speaking, I should be happy to publish the work."

At the same time [he adds], I hope the author will pardon me for the liberty I take in hinting that I feel confident she could very greatly improve the first volume, so as, in my humble opinion, to make it more acceptable to British readers —who are not accustomed to a husband knocking down his wife, nor yet to some other traits of Continental manners.

That novel has gone the way of all novels: it was one of Lady Charlotte Bury's, and probably no one living knows whether she took the advice of her judicious publisher or not; but the letter transports us whimsically back to the period in which "Continental manners" were credited with all kinds of atrocity, and only a chance traveller here and there had brought any knowledge of the dark countries long shut up by the wars, and naturally believed to be the home of every cruelty. We fear that, in respect to the knocking down of wives, at least, the association nowadays is anything but Continental.

Perhaps it may be well here, and more convenient to the reader as enabling him to keep the thread of the different interests and personages who cross this busy scene, to anticipate a few years of Mr Blackwood's career, and trace out his connection with Miss Ferrier to its conclusion. Everybody now knows something of the witty and delightful "sister shadow" to whom Sir Walter paid so beautiful a tribute. She came from the same original, genial, sagacious, and humorous race, that strata of Scottish gentry deposited in Edinburgh, and owing, perhaps, some readiness and

flow of social gifts to the associations of the northern capital, and the constant intercourse and sharpening of its wits—which produced Sir Walter himself, and was his sister spirit in more than writing. She was afterwards connected with the circle of wits who inspired the Magazine through her nephew, J. F. Ferrier, the well-known metaphysician, and his witty wife, the daughter of Professor Wilson: but these were all "unborn faces" at the time of Susan Ferrier's literary beginning. There was as yet no Magazine; and Wilson was an unknown young university man, known at least only for athletic feats, and an inclination towards poetry of the sentimental kind. 'Marriage' came out of the cheerful and critical centre of Edinburgh society, as 'Sense and Sensibility' came from the serene levels of English country life, with no warning, floating upwards like the tiny balloons which were one of the wonders of that day, carrying each the little circle of a new undiscovered world to the bigger universe around. Miss Ferrier was as Scotch as Miss Austen was English; but the Edinburgh lady had not that fine and pointed cynicism with which her contemporary touched the lines of the minute all-embracing picture. There was much fine sentiment and ideal portraiture mingled with the broader humour and larger laugh of the Scot, and perhaps her superfine Marys and Gertrudes took away a little of the unmingled effect of the other; though Miss Girzy, on the other hand, is as amusing as Miss Bates, although she has a much sweeter attraction. The two writers may, however, be now said to occupy a very similar level, and there are very few names which can be placed beside them. We feel disposed to believe

that part of the divine element which had gone to the making of Scott, being left over, had framed these other secondary yet not inferior souls. It was Mr Blackwood, ever thoughtful of giving pleasure to his friends, who sent to Miss Ferrier "the concluding sentence of the new 'Tales of my Landlord,' which are to be published to-morrow." This consisted, if the reader perchance may have forgotten, of the following words:—

"If the present author, himself a phantom, may be permitted to distinguish a brother or perhaps a sister shadow, he would mention in particular the author of the very lively work entitled 'Marriage.'"

"After this," says the publisher, "surely you will be no longer silent. If the great Magician does not conquer you, I shall give up all hopes." Up to this time, it is evident, Miss Ferrier, like her contemporary, Miss Austen, shrank with a horrified femininity, which it is amusing to see nowadays, from any betrayal of identity. Her packets of proof are directed on one occasion under cover to a friend, as if they had been clandestine love-letters. "There are none of my people who will suppose anything whatever," says the publisher demurely. We are not informed whether the great Magician overcame these scruples — but there are some delightful letters from Blackwood to Miss Ferrier, dated in the year 1824, touching another of her novels, which I must be allowed to quote. The first has been published before in an article upon Miss Ferrier in the 'Temple Bar Magazine.' The last, I believe, is quite new to the public:—

On Wednesday I dined in company with Sir Walter Scott, and he spoke of the work ['The Inheritance'] in the very high-

est terms. I don't always set the highest value on the Baronet's favourable opinion of a book, because he has so much kindness of feeling towards every one; but in this case he spoke so much *con amore,* and entered so completely and at such length into the spirit of the book, and of the characters, as showed me at once the impression it had made on him. Every one I have seen who has read the book gives the same praise to it.

On another occasion he has been urging the writer to go on with and finish her next novel, "having full confidence in your own power." "You are in such a vein for it just now," says the genial publisher, "that I hope you have been able to shut yourself up to-day, and not been disturbed by the Saturday's young folks." And he adds the following as his highest argument:—

I had not had time till now to read the two new chapters, and I wanted to tell you how much I had been delighted with them, particularly the last one. Lyndsay is admirably brought out, and you have only to go on as you are going to sustain the character which Sir Walter gave me of 'Marriage'—that you had the rare talent of making your conclusion even better than your commencement: for said this worthy and veracious person, "Mr Blackwood, if ever I were to write a novel, I would like to write the two first volumes, and leave anybody that liked to write the third"!

The delightful ease and irresponsibility of "this veracious person's" wish is enchanting. It is a wish, however, which will be echoed by many a smaller romancer.

For this novel, 'The Inheritance,' which was the second of Miss Ferrier's books, the publisher gave £1000, a great improvement upon the £150 he had given for the first; and this not for the entire copy-

right. But, curiously enough, the book does not seem to have been successful—so little so indeed that the correspondence in respect to 'Destiny,' her third work, was much cooler in tone; and this book was not published by Mr Blackwood. It was, in fact, much less able than the others.

Miss Ferrier lived to old age, and became, we are told, so completely occupied with religious questions as to dislike and disapprove of the delightful works of her earlier days, which is an unfortunate circumstance. She has retained a high and quite individual place in fiction, one of a band of three women who form a sort of representative group in their way of the three countries, which, it is to be hoped, no unpropitious fate will ever sunder or make to be other than one.

CHAPTER II.

THE TALES OF MY LANDLORD.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH JOHN MURRAY — BYRON AND HIS PUBLISHER — SCOTT DINES WITH BLACKWOOD—'THE SIEGE OF CORINTH'—CHARLES KIRKPATRICK SHARPE — LETTER TO SOUTHEY — NEGOTIATIONS WITH BALLANTYNE FOR PUBLICATION OF 'THE TALES OF MY LANDLORD'—'THE BLACK DWARF'—BLACKWOOD'S CRITICISM—SCOTT'S REJOINDER: THE "BLACK HUSSARS OF LITERATURE" LETTER—WILLIAM GIFFORD—MURRAY'S LETTER TO SCOTT—FRICTION WITH BALLANTYNE—FUTURE EDITIONS TO BE PUBLISHED BY CONSTABLE—BLACKWOOD'S REGARD FOR SCOTT.

THE correspondence between Murray and Blackwood is our chief guide through the obscurity of these early years. Not long after the Edinburgh bookseller became the agent of the important house in London, he extended his business at home in the following manner—a step which he immediately communicates to his correspondent:—

W. Blackwood to J. Murray.

EDIN., 10*th March* 1813.

John Ballantyne has transferred to me all his retail customers, and makes me his retail publisher here. This will be of very great use to me, as it interests Walter Scott deeply in all my concerns. I have of course a stock of all their books, and will therefore be able to supply you with any new book of theirs 5 per cent below sale. If you want any 8vo 'Rokeby'

when ready, please write me. They have just published a very pretty poem, 'Triermain,' which Jeffrey talks of in the highest terms, and is to review in the next number of the 'Edinburgh.' I have sent you 20 copies by yesterday's smack, and enclosed 12 'Widow's Lodgings,' a novel which they have also just published. I have not been able to hear who he [the author] is, nor yet who is the author of 'Triermain.' . . . 'Triermain,' you may be sure, is not written by Mr Terry.

The occasional item of news which occurs from time to time in these letters sometimes throws a curious contemporary light upon a well-known event. Here is the first intimation of the battle of Waterloo. There is a solemnity in the tone of the announcement which must have made the reader fear a great disaster instead of the extraordinary triumph which changed the whole course of modern history. The letter is dated June 21, 1815:—

I sent you yesterday the 'Courier,' and have ordered another, that you may learn more satisfactory particulars of the dreadful event than have yet been published by Government, or (perhaps) received by them. I very much fear the truth to be that both Wellington and Blucher were surprised, and that it was a desperate battle, falling chiefly upon the British, and that it [here words omitted, "ended well"] only by Bonaparte's not effecting his too well-designed attack. We have lost one-fourth at least of our army—perhaps one-third of our very best troops. We ought not to conclude, however, without authentic despatches, and we shall certainly be more vigilant hereafter. It is an awful moment.

In the biography of the Murrays, we are informed that Blackwood ran all over Edinburgh with this wonderful news; but the way in which it is stated would scarcely justify any such outburst of delight. A great controversy, scarcely silenced even now, arose

afterwards as to whether Wellington was surprised or not; and Alison in his History, which was one of the most successful books ever published by the Blackwoods, warmly maintained that he was. It is curious to note what seems to have been the opinion of the moment — though this, of course, is the merest passing report.

More in the usual scope of the correspondence is the long letter in which the proud and delighted publisher of London reports to his friend the last new incident of his intercourse with Byron, of which he was naturally so proud. If Blackwood had the hope of interesting "Walter Scott deeply in all my concerns," Murray could for the moment overcrow him with his noble poet:—

John Murray to W. Blackwood.

Dec. 5, 1815.

Lord Byron is a curious man. He gave me, as I told you, the copyright of his two new poems, to be printed only in his works. I did not receive the last until Tuesday night. I was so delighted with it that even as I read it I sent him a draught for 1000 guineas. The two poems are altogether no more than twelve hundred and fifteen hundred lines, and will together sell for five and sixpence. But he returned the draught, saying it was very liberal—much more than they were worth; that I was perfectly welcome to both poems to print in his (collected) works without cost or expectation, but that he did not think them equal to what they ought to be, and that he would not admit of their separate publication. I went yesterday, and he was rallying me upon my folly in offering so much, that he dared to say I thought now I had a most lucky escape. "To prove how much I think so, my lord," said I, "do me the favour to accept this pocket-book"—in which I had brought with me my draught changed into two bank-notes of £1000 and £50; but he would not take it. But I am not in despair

that he will yet allow their separate publication, which I must continue to urge for mine own honour. These poems are not by any means equally finished as the 'Corsair,' but the 'Siege of Corinth' contains two or three of the finest scenes he ever conceived, and the other, called 'Parisina,' is the most interesting and best conceived and best told story I ever read. I was never more affected; and you may be sure, from habit, I can tell when a thing is very good, and, moreover, that I have, according to our respective situations, as much to resign in my property in his name and fame as he has. I shall long to send them to you, and should think that James Ballantyne would give you and Scott and Erskine a dinner to read them.

It was Mr Blackwood himself who gave the dinner at the house in Salisbury Road; which, I think, must have been the time when a little speech made by the distinguished guest found its place in the domestic archives. Mr Scott, sitting by the side of the mistress of the house, and looking out upon the garden, remarked upon the fact that a green lawn occupied the greater part of it, instead of flowers—to which Mrs Blackwood replied that the pleasant green was better for her little boys than flower-beds. "Ah, *they* are your flowers," said the genial guest, no doubt with a glance at the sturdy little figures trooping in with joyful pride to dessert, whoever might be there: a pride and joy more complete to the father of the family than even the presence of the greatest poet, or of 'Parisina' on the side-table waiting to be read. But Mr Scott was "quite enthusiastic with regard to the Poems, and considers Monday's meeting one of the highest treats and greatest favours ever done him," as Blackwood made haste to report.

It was not, however, solely on Byron's account that this dinner was given. There were in the

meantime mysterious hopes and speculations in the air which touched the Edinburgh publisher with an excited expectation fully equal to the complacent delight of the Londoner over his noble poet. James Ballantyne, the man of confidence, agent, and to some extent, as such a confidential vassal always believes at least, director of the veiled Prophet of the day—the great unknown author of 'Waverley'—had lately been throwing out hints and suggestions enough to turn a young publisher's head. Ballantyne had a double prize in his hand for skilful manipulation. There was Mr Scott, with the poetry which had been supreme till Byron appeared, and which even now was popular enough to be well worth securing, not to speak of the honour and glory; and there was the author of 'Waverley,' who was or was not Scott, according to the balance of surmises which rose and fell every day. The next poem perhaps—the next novel: whichever it was, it would be a piece of immense good fortune for the young bookseller in Princes Street, aspiring to the very highest levels of the trade. And Ballantyne's vapourings and often-repeated hints and professions—quite sincere, no doubt—of friendship and desire to serve his friend might refer to either. "He assured me that Mr Scott would take an interest in me, and matters would take that turn with you and me which I had so long been wishing to bring about," Blackwood wrote. "Independent of the delight of listening to Lord Byron's poetry, it was one of the great objects I had in being so anxious for your sending me the poems, that I might have an opportunity of drawing closer as it were to Mr Scott, and at the

same time showing him the confidence you had in me and the friendship you showed me. All this acts for our mutual interest."

There are few writers in the literary world now, or at any time, whose works excite the general mind, and above all the mind of a publisher, as Byron and Scott did in their time; neither, so far as we are aware, in these days when literature is weighed by the thousand words like a packet of tea, would any publishers, scarcely perhaps the heads of the traditionary houses, rouse each other's enthusiasm, and fish for one man of genius with the celestial bait of a *primeur* of the productions of another. Murray and Blackwood were both careful business men, calculating the effects of such a *coup*, and with many solid and serious meanings under the social triumph and literary enthusiasm of such a party as that in the Salisbury Road. But shrewd and astute as they were, they had also a true literary enthusiasm, and were perfectly sincere in the conviction that this same genius, though so excellent a slave and so apt to draw their chariots to the heights of fortune, was at the same time the finest thing in the world, made to be adored and applauded for its own sake. There was true delight and admiration, as well as high policy, in the pocket-book with its two crisp new notes which John Murray tendered to the jesting disdainful lordship whom still, notwithstanding several refusals, he did not despair of persuading to accept it in the end; and honest enthusiasm in William Blackwood for the great northern minstrel and magician, already the pride of Scotland, whom he made such eager efforts to attract and convince that he himself,

in the confidence of the great English publisher, and intrusted with an astounding unpublished work of the great English poet, was the man above all others to be trusted. The rumour of that great entertainment —"that Mr Scott dined with me, and read the poems, and was in raptures with them"—ran over all the town. "I should have liked," adds Blackwood with natural triumph, "to have seen Constable when he first heard the intelligence." Thus all the elements of dramatic interest were in the position,—pure hero-worship and love of literature, honest determination to secure one's own interest, and lively pleasure in discomfiting a rival. To the credit of both publishers, it must be added that the first motive was quite as genuine as the others; and if ever the younger of the two envied his partner, it was for his power magnificently to send that thousand guineas to the object of their admiration, without taking thought. "You have the happiness of making it a liberal profession, and not a mere business of pence," he wrote admiringly. "This I consider one of the greatest privileges we have in our business."

We may pause, however, here to note that these poems were of course published shortly after, not in Lord Byron's collected works, and that he was persuaded to accept the publisher's liberal offer, though before this time the noble poet's career was drawing near that crash of ruin and misadventure in which it closed in England, but into which we are glad to have no occasion to enter. Here is a curious piece of criticism on Murray's part, in answer, it would appear, to some impertinent comments of the public upon the publication. It accompanies a consignment of four

hundred and fifty copies of the 'Siege of Corinth,' to be sold in Edinburgh :—

I am glad that your friend M'Crie is pleased, for he is a *Genius*, and represents many of a strong but peculiar form of mind whom one would not have expected to be smitten. And I am no less delighted to find Dr Brewster occupy half a letter to-day with an account of his exstasies. Many who "by numbers judge a poet's song" are so stupid as not to see the powerful effect of the poems, which is the great object of poetry, because they can pick out fifty careless or even bad lines. The words may be carelessly put together, but this is secondary. Many can write polished lines who will never reach the name of poet. You see it is all poetically conceived in Lord B.'s mind.

There is a dazzled vagueness in this comment through which one can see that the writer had a faint comprehension of what he himself meant, without much power of expressing it. It is prose expounding poetry with a general sense of something in it beyond verbal criticism.

I find very early in Blackwood's career a sharp little correspondence with the well-known Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, in which the young and scarcely yet fully fledged publisher puts forth his own principle of action against the querulous writer—whose attempt to stand upon what he considered his superior station is more contemptible than dignified—with much precision and firmness. Sharpe was about to publish a book heavily laden with notes, and had warned the publisher that he would admit no criticism. The date is so early as 1815 :—

W. Blackwood to C. Kirkpatrick Sharpe.

I have only this moment on my getting home opened your packet and found your note. I feel as much as you can do the

necessity of our *understanding each other.* Till we do so I do not consider myself at liberty to read a single line of your notes, and have therefore sealed them up till I hear from you. You state as your *sine qua non* that you will not cancel a single line of these notes. Now, I hope you will pardon me for saying that if I understand you rightly this is so much *en cavalier* that I cannot without some explanation publish a work where I conceive myself to be so very differently treated from what I have always been by the authors with whom I have had the honour to be connected. I have always been accustomed to take an interest in the literary department of my business, and however trifling my suggestions may have been, I have had them considered and attended to by men of no small note. From the very slight glance I had of your notes on Thursday I could form no decided opinion; but I expected when you did me the honour of putting your MS. into my hands I should have been at liberty to state frankly my opinion if anything occurred to me that I conceived might be either altered or omitted. I never, however, conceived that, contrary to your own judgment, you would either have altered or omitted what you thought right. I have thus fairly stated to you what occurs to me, and if we now understand each other I shall be extremely happy to go on with a work which I hope will do credit both to Editor and publisher. I therefore wait your answer till I know whether or not I may commence the *lecture* of your notes, from which I expect not a little entertainment.

Mr Sharpe answered this note in a still more cavalier strain, treating the very independent person he addressed as one so much beneath him in the social scale as to make good manners unnecessary. "Dear Mr B.," he says, "I shall be sorry if I have said any rudeness to you, because I hold that no distinctions of station warrant ill-breeding." Mr Blackwood was not one who held distinctions of station lightly; but the pretensions of "Cheeping Charlie" fired his blood.

After the previous correspondence [he says] it was quite

unnecessary for you to propose anew my publishing 'Kirkton.' I should never be able duly to appreciate the "distinctions of society" and the "punctilios," which really I was not aware of. My mode of conducting business is uniform, and I hope will always be found correct as well as honourable. As I am to pay you for your labour it mattered not to me, nor did I ever think for a moment whether you were, as you term it, an author by profession. Your choosing another publisher puts me to no inconvenience whatever, except that on the faith of our agreement I had ordered paper, and engaged with a printer, who ordered type on purpose for the book; but it surely can be no matter of difficulty with you to make it a condition with your new publisher that he should employ Mr Cleast, and take the paper from Messrs Cowan.

It may have been—who can tell?—this passage of arms which made Kirkpatrick Sharpe figure in the Chaldee Manuscript; but no doubt the young men had their grievances against him too.

To show that Blackwood's suggestions were very differently received in some quarters, and that his correspondence was already extensive, I may quote here the following note:—

W. Blackwood to R. Southey.

EDINBURGH, *July* 5, 1816.

A few weeks ago I took the liberty of sending you a small packet, which I hope you have received. I now beg leave to enclose my friend Dr M'Crie's report concerning the Protestants in the South of France. I have always been expecting to see an article on this interesting subject in the 'Quarterly Review,' and I hope it will yet be taken up. I trust you will pardon me, almost a stranger to you, for venturing to suggest the subject.

The suggestion bore fruit: we find an allusion to it in one of Murray's letters, in which the London publisher thanks the Edinburgh one for the idea, and

begs him when he thinks of anything of the kind to be sure always to mention it.

In the meantime, while Byron and his proceedings occupied all the foreground in London, the great hope which had irradiated the Edinburgh publisher's horizon began to take form. The transaction that followed has been curiously misrepresented, though probably not with any unkind meaning. Lockhart distinctly assures us that, both Ballantyne and Blackwood being dead at the time he wrote, and Murray having no personal knowledge of the facts and evidently no desire to dwell upon them, he had no accurate information on the subject. The transaction is dismissed accordingly with a hot and hasty note from Scott; and the impression left by the incident altogether is disagreeable, disrespectful to Mr Blackwood, and harsh and unfriendly to all concerned. The letters which passed day by day, however, and which are now before us, convey no such impression, nor did Scott's resentment in respect to criticism, or any other similar sentiment, occasion any breach between author and publisher. We are glad to be able to set this incident, which was one of great importance in Blackwood's early life, in its proper light. It may be premised that Scott at this time had not definitely connected himself with any one publisher. It had been Constable who brought out 'Waverley,' while 'Guy Mannering' was given to Longman. Whether the negotiations with Blackwood were intended as a third experiment before the matter was finally settled, or whether their design was to stimulate Constable to stronger efforts to secure such a valuable

monopoly, as some people think, I am unable to say: at all events, the offer to Blackwood seemed of a perfectly honest and straightforward kind to begin with.

Shortly after the dinner-party above recorded, the hints and promises of Ballantyne came to a definite proposal, and he offered to Blackwood, "by instructions from the author," a work in four volumes to be called 'The Tales of my Landlord': each volume was intended to contain a separate tale, an arrangement afterwards altered, and the work was thus to be of more than usual importance, as including a succession of books. We may quote from Blackwood's letter to Murray an account of the interview in which the proposal was first definitely made:—

W. Blackwood to John Murray.

He [James Ballantyne] began by telling me that he thought he had it now in his power to show me how sensible he was of the services I had done him, and how anxious he was to accomplish that union of interests which he had so long been endeavouring to bring about. Till now he had only made professions: now he would act. He said that he was empowered to offer me, along with you, a work of fiction in four volumes such as 'Waverley,' &c.; that he had read a considerable part of it, and knowing the plan of the whole, he could answer for its being a production of the very first class; but that he was not at liberty to mention the title, nor was he at liberty to give the author's name. I naturally asked him, was it by the author of 'Waverley'? He said it was to have no reference to any other work whatever, and any one would be at liberty to form their own conjecture as to the author. He only requested that whatever we might suppose from anything that might occur afterwards we should keep strictly to ourselves: that we were to be the publishers. The terms he was empowered by the author to offer for it were:—

1. The author to receive one-half of the profits of each

edition: these profits to be ascertained by deducting the paper and printing from the proceeds of the book sold at sale price—the publishers to be at the whole of the expense of advertising. 2. The property of the book to be the publishers', who were to print such editions as they chose. 3. The only condition upon which the author would agree to these terms is, that the publisher should take £600 of John Ballantyne's stock selected from the list annexed, deducting 25 per cent from the affixed sale prices. 4. If these terms are agreed to, the stock to the above amount to be immediately delivered, and a bill granted at twelve months. 5. That in the course of six or eight weeks J. B. expected to be able to put into my hands the first two volumes printed, and that if, on perusal, we did not like the bargain, we should be at liberty to give it up. This he considered to be most unlikely; but if it should be the case, he would bind himself to repay or re-deliver the bill on the books being returned. 6. That the edition, consisting of 2000 copies, should be printed and ready for delivery by the 1st October next.

I have thus stated to you as nearly as I can the substance of what passed. I tried in various ways to learn something with regard to the author, but he was quite impenetrable. My own impression now is that it must be Walter Scott, for no one else would think of burdening us with such trash as John B.'s wretched stock. This is such a burden that I am puzzled not a little. I endeavoured every way I could to get him to propose other terms, but he told me these could not be departed from in a single part; and the other works had been taken on the same conditions, and he knew they would be greedily accepted again in the same quarter. After giving it my consideration and making some calculations, I confess I feel inclined to hazard the speculation; but still I feel doubtful until I hear what you think of it.

That this curious offer of a mysterious work without name or author known, however strongly and justly divined, and weighted by a preliminary tax of £600, for the unsaleable books of John Ballantyne's "wretched stock," should yet have been, notwithstanding their

anxious correspondence, accepted in each man's mind from the beginning and with eagerness, is a wonderful evidence of the atmosphere of wonder and expectation with which the author of 'Waverley' had filled the world. There could be no doubt, to any one who knew the circumstances, that the book was his; and yet it was his caprice that there should be a double veil of mystery over this new venture, and that the new publisher should accept it blindly from the silent hand stretched out from the darkness, with the most complete faith. The success of this astonishing proposal, and the scarcely concealed eagerness of the serious and sober men of business to whom it was made, must have afforded a whimsical amusement as well as satisfaction in his own boundless success and power to that mysterious author, the so-little-mysterious man who met them every day with all the frankness and cordiality of his nature. But he would not waive a jot of the demands, which he knew would be "greedily accepted" in other quarters, indeed wherever it might please him to offer them. These demands were harder than the two publishers at first understood. "James has made one or two important mistakes in the bargain with Murray and Blackwood," writes Scott. "Having only authority from me to promise six thousand copies, he proposes they shall have the copyright *for ever*. I will see their noses cheese first. . . . He talks of volumes being put into the publishers' hands to consider and decide on. No such thing; a bare perusal at St John Street only." Notwithstanding all this, there never was really any doubt that the proposal would be accepted.

The following letters respecting this bargain which passed between James Ballantyne and Mr Blackwood disclose all the different steps of the transaction very clearly :—

J. Ballantyne to W. Blackwood.

30*th April* 1816.

I enclose you a formal offer, with this positive assurance that I cannot vary from it in one single particular; so that if you wish, as I believe most firmly you do, that the bargain should be completed, I will sign the offer to-day before dinner. But I again repeat, that whatever may be my wishes I cannot vary from the terms of the offer in any one respect. By the by, I should say that bills for the author's profits will be accepted at twelve months if you insist on it; but I advise you not to insist upon it. The compromise I have put in of six and twelve months would be extremely well taken by the author. And he knows he could get them from other quarters.

A subsequent letter hesitates even in respect of this compromise, repeating the warning that there were other ways of obtaining all that the author desired. "If the bargain appears in the least hard to Mr B., there are others ready to accept for these profits at six months, the instant the first volume goes to press. He is only to accept at six and twelve months from the period that the whole four volumes *come from* the press." These lesser stipulations, however, seem at last to have been accepted, and, what was perhaps most important to the intermediate agent at least, the six hundred pounds' worth of John Ballantyne's unsaleable stock was unwillingly selected, and the money paid in bills at six months, according to the ordinary custom.

In this as in the other conditions of the bargain,

Mr Murray writes that he is willing to take his "full share of the responsibility." The manner in which he agrees to the transaction is characteristic:—

"I enter upon it, however, not as a matter of business, or even almost experiment, but in the same way as I should buy a lottery ticket, considering it as money which I could afford, or rather choose, to throw away—and think no more of it unless it actually came up a prize." It is perhaps also in respect to this that he writes significantly in another letter, "I take care that everything pays me in some way," —a statement full of meaning.

After this there occurred an interval of silence, and everything dropped into its usual routine,—a silence soon full of uneasiness for Blackwood, who waited week by week with great anxiety to hear something more of his book: but not a word came. The bills for John Ballantyne's stock had been given at once and the books delivered, and there for the moment the transaction seemed to have stopped short. In the original bargain it had been stated that the book was to be ready for publication on the 1st of October. In the meantime other incidents had occurred to make Blackwood uneasy. A historical work, described as "Letters upon the History of Scotland, by Walter Scott," had been offered to him in conjunction with Murray, and then had been announced as about to be published by Constable,—a fact which wounded him deeply. He complained to Ballantyne of this, and received through him a somewhat haughty message from Scott desiring Mr Blackwood to apply for information on the subject to himself, as it was a matter with which Ballantyne had nothing to do; but this was the last thing in the

world that the publisher desired. "One in business must submit to many things," he writes to Murray, "and swallow many a bitter pill when such a man as Walter Scott is the object in view." Murray too was willing rather to swallow the pill than to endanger the attainment of Walter Scott with the author of 'Waverley' at his back. But as the summer went on the sense of uncertainty and the tediousness of waiting grew more and more. In July it began to be insupportable, interrupting every other thought. Early in this month Blackwood communicated his feelings to Murray, who was little less anxious than himself:—

W. Blackwood to John Murray.

July 2, 1816.

This morning I got up between five and six, but instead of sitting down to write you, as I had intended, I mounted my pony and took a long ride to collect my thoughts. Sitting, walking, or riding, it is all the same. I feel as much puzzled as ever, and undetermined whether or not to cut the Gordian knot. Except my wife, there is not a friend whom I dare advise with. I have not ventured to mention the business at all to my brother, on account of the cursed mysteries and injunctions of secrecy connected with it. I know he would blame me for ever engaging in it, for he has a very small opinion of the Ballantynes. I cannot, therefore, be benefited by his advice. Mrs Blackwood, though she always disliked my having any connection with the Ballantynes, rather thinks we should wait a few weeks longer till we see what is produced. I believe, after all, this is the safest course to pursue.

By the end of the month, however, his impatience was no longer to be controlled, and on the 31st July he addressed James Ballantyne as follows:—

It surely will not be thought unreasonable that Mr Murray and I should, at a distance of three months from the period

at which we granted our acceptances for six hundred pounds, feel rather impatient at hearing nothing whatever of the Work of Fiction of which you assured me the first volume would be printed and put into my hands upwards of two months ago. We beg you would now inform us what is doing, or is to be done, as it is most unpleasant to have the business hanging in this way.

The plausible James replied instantly to Mr Blackwood :—

I should be myself entirely unreasonable if I thought there was anything unreasonable in the solicitude which you express in Mr Murray's name and your own respecting this work, for which you have granted your bills—I think it, on the contrary, natural and unavoidable.

This matter has taught me a lesson which I will not forget—which is, never to give my own conviction for that of others. In place, therefore, of saying what *I* think upon the subject, I shall tell you what the author says to me. He says, then, that I shall have the first vol. in my hands by the end of August, and that the whole work will, as he all along said, be ready for publication by Christmas. This I say for him: I will pledge myself no longer.

This clever assumption of a grievance in his own innocent person, and candid incapacity to answer for another unaccountable individual, is a very good example of Scott's Aldiborontophoscophornio, the genial vassal ready to serve his principal's eccentricities even by blaming him when needful, with uplifted hands and eyes of regret and wonder. "This matter has taught me a lesson which I will not forget"! Plausible as it all was, however, it did not satisfy Mr Blackwood, and there would seem to have been in the beginning of August a conversation of the most important kind between the impatient publisher and the slippery

agent. There is no record of this conversation, but its purport is easily divined from the letter that follows :—

J. Ballantyne to W. Blackwood.

5th August 1816.

After the decisive conversation which we had on Saturday, you may perhaps be surprised that I should again wish to bring the subject before you. But, independently of my most anxious desire that a thing which I continue as strongly as ever to think would be mutually advantageous, should not be blown away by a trifling delay—independently of this wish, it is my duty to remove one important misconception under which you appear to have long laboured, and this I am sure I can accomplish although I should fail in everything else.

You appear to think, and I rather think you have distinctly stated that you do so, that the author of the work of fiction has wittingly or rather wilfully delayed putting the volume into your hands "because he had views elsewhere," views which you must suppose to have arisen after my first being empowered to make an offer of the work to you. Now, if this was really the case, it is undeniable that he would joyfully avail himself of your rejection, and feel that he had accomplished the object he was driving at. But so far is this from being the case, that he desires me to express to you in the strongest terms his wish not to change his publisher. His words are these: "The work is now ready to go to the press; and you will have the copy in two days. The work will to a certainty be out in the month of November, a period which I have always understood to be the very best for publication. This I beg you will state to Mr Blackwood distinctly and explicitly; and there is so much reason in the thing that I cannot but think he will listen to it."

Such are the precise words of the author, and whatever other impression they may produce on you, you will surely admit that they at least prove beyond the possibility of denial that he had and has no such views as you ascribe to him; that he does *not* wish to change his publishers; and that he

has *no* views elsewhere. Indeed, it is with a view of clearing his and my own good faith to you and Mr Murray, that we are anxiously desirous you should be convinced that you refuse the work, if you refuse it, when it is ready for press, and when the author is pledged to its publication at a specific period, the very best in the whole year for publication.

Now, my dear Sir, what more can be said, or what more can you wish? If the negotiation is now broken off, surely you will allow that it is not the fault either of the author or of myself; and if, after this distinct explanation and assurance, you continue in the mind which you stated on Saturday, I can only say it will give us both deep and sincere concern.—Believe me to be, and I trust I do not say so for the last time, your sincere friend and faithful servant,

JAMES BALLANTYNE.

This letter was supplemented later in the day by another bearing the same date, 5th August:—

In addition to what I stated in my letter to you of this morning, I beg to say, that rather than have recourse to other publishers than yourself and Mr Murray, the author of the Work of Fiction authorises me to agree to the terms of credit which you originally stipulated for—to wit, 12 instead of 6 months [bills].

If it were merely a pecuniary matter that was at stake, I assure you I should feel no solicitude whatever in this business; for, should your decision render it necessary, I should be ready in as short a period as could reasonably be expected to deliver up your bills. But however conscious both the author and myself are of our perfect good faith in this transaction, it is painful beyond measure that it should be suspected; and it is to convince you of this, or at least to afford you the strongest reason for being convinced, that our anxiety arises for completing the bargain. Certainly, also, it would to me be extremely painful to lose a friend through the very measures by which I had hoped to confirm him.

I beg leave to conclude with asserting upon my solemn word not only that the author has not, nor ever had, "any views else-

where," but that the existence of the work in question is at this moment unknown to every human creature except yourself, Mr Murray, myself, and my brother. As I understand that you are now at Dalhousie Castle, I think this communication of sufficient importance to send it after you. I ought to add that I have this moment received a considerable portion of the MS. of the work; and that I distinctly pledge the author's word that the whole will be ready in the month of November.

These anxious excuses and arguments went on for some days—there being also a secondary question to discuss in respect to some portion of John Ballantyne's stock which was not according to the bargain, and for which a hundred pounds was subtracted accordingly—until at length James Ballantyne wrote to announce that about two-thirds of the first volume were to be sent to-morrow evening,—the date is 21st August: so it is evident that no time had been lost. Blackwood had requested, with some urgency, that he might have permission to send the manuscript on to London.

I have myself [says Ballantyne] read it with the greatest admiration and delight. The remainder, I think, will be ready for your inspection about the beginning of next week. I read your letter about the transmission of the first volume to London to the author, thinking that the best mode of signifying your wish, and the causes on which it was founded. The author's refusal is couched in these words: "Nothing shall induce me to allow the book to go out of your hands. To send it to London would hazard things, which I cannot think of risking. Mr Blackwood's taste is as competent as that of any man to enable him to come to a just conclusion, and I will not subject the book to the refusal of another."

Any further application would be needless, I am sure. But I trust your own judgment will decide you. Few men have a better.

Blackwood replies to this on the same day. We quote from the scroll or *brouillon* of his letter, which is a thing frequently found among his papers, and often even more characteristic in the passages struck out than in those which are allowed to stand. He writes on this occasion :—

W. Blackwood to J. Ballantyne.

To thank you for the welcome intelligence, and to congratulate with you upon our now being fully in sight of land, with every prospect, from what you say, of coming to a right anchor. You will give me all that you have ready as early as you can to-morrow, as I need not tell you how great my impatience is to devour it. Be so good as to let me know in the morning at what hour I may expect it. The author and you are kind enough to soften the refusal of my request as to Mr Murray [" about its being sent to London " struck out] by saying very much too flattering things with regard to my judgment (which I would have been as well pleased to have dispensed with). I should have been much more pleased to have been praised less and listened to more. But this cannot be helped, and I anxiously hope the Book will speak for itself to all and every one, and so that my responsibility will be trifling.

Next day another anxious note heralds the all-important proof :—

J. Ballantyne to W. Blackwood.

22*nd August* 1816.

You shall have all that is thrown off, and what is composed, before dinner. The remainder of the volume will be ready, I think, early next week. Tastes are as different as faces; and you may not like what I think altogether exquisite. But I have strong hopes of our coming to an immediate and mutually agreeable conclusion to this business.

P.S.—By waiting till *seven* this evening I find I shall be able to send you 8 sheets; only, as the two last are perhaps the

finest of the whole, I am averse to your not getting them. Don't worry! for you *shall* have them at tea-time.

One can imagine the excitement, the eager anxiety, the watch kept at the door for the messenger from the printing-office—no printer's devil in this case, but a messenger of the gods. Alas! at this point there is a gap in the correspondence. The excited publisher was too warmly inspired to write any scroll of his reply. We find another version of it, however, in the correspondence of Mr Murray, dashed off on the same eventful evening, without stopping to take breath:—

W. Blackwood to John Murray.

August 23, 1816—*Midnight.*

My dear Murray,—I have this moment finished the reading of 192 pages of our book—for ours it must be—and I cannot go to bed without telling you what is the strong and most favourable impression it has made upon me. If the remainder be at all equal, which it cannot fail to be from the genius displayed in what is now before me, we have been most fortunate indeed. The title is 'The Tales of my Landlord; collected and reported by Jedediah Cleishbotham, Parish Clerk and Schoolmaster of Gandercleugh.' There cannot be a doubt as to the splendid merit of the work. It would never have done to have higgled and protested about seeing more volumes. I have now neither doubts nor fears, and I anxiously hope you will have as little. I am so happy at the fortunate termination of all my pains and anxieties, that I cannot be in bad humour with you for not writing me two lines in answer to my two last letters.

It is clear that the reply to Ballantyne was not less enthusiastic than this, for the next letter, we find, is from that able negotiant, and is full of the triumphant composure of a victor, one who has been conscious from the beginning of inevitable glory:—

J. Ballantyne to W. Blackwood.

23rd August.

I need not say that your letter has given me great pleasure. I never in my life had anything more at heart than to show you by substantial proof that I felt as I ought to do towards you: and my vexation was proportioned to the disappointment which at one period had overset all my hopes. Nothing kept me up but the consciousness that I had done my possible. Your approbation is just as it ought to be. Had it been calm, it would have been unworthy both the work and yourself. Yes; it is a work of tremendous splendour, and may it turn out—it must turn out—as we both expect. Your letter to Murray, which I enclose, is a most excellent *précis*. Keep the sheets as long as you like, but I beg you to return them. I have most especial reasons for this.

We might now suppose that everybody was as much satisfied and wholly triumphant as it was possible to be; but there were still further troubles in the way of the Work of Fiction, as it had been hitherto comically and formally entitled between these correspondents. The story was told by Lockhart in the 'Life of Sir Walter Scott' in a way which—probably without intention, yet perhaps, who can tell? in the character of the Scorpion who delighteth to sting the faces of men—left a disagreeable impression as to the part taken by Mr Blackwood, and seemed to account for the fact that the 'Black Dwarf' was the only one of Scott's works published by him. I will quote this from Lockhart's narrative, premising that, by his own account, before it was written, both Blackwood and Ballantyne were dead. Mr Murray, not caring, I presume, to open up the records of a story which came to an inglorious end, furnished little information; and, except the sons of the Edinburgh publisher, there was nobody to be wounded by the story:—

I know not how much of the tale of the 'Black Dwarf' had been seen by Blackwood, in St John Street, before he concluded this bargain for himself and his friend Murray; but when the closing sheets of that novel reached him, he considered them as by no means sustaining the delightful promise of the opening ones. He was a man of strong talents, and though without anything that could be called learning, of very respectable information—greatly superior to what has, in this age, been common in his profession; acute, earnest, eminently zealous in whatever he put his hand to; upright, honest, sincere, and courageous. But as Constable owed his first introduction to the upper world of literature and of society in general to his 'Edinburgh Review,' so did Blackwood his to his 'Magazine,' which has now made his name familiar to the world—and at the period of which I write, that miscellany was unknown: he was known only as a diligent antiquarian bookseller and the Scotch agent of the great London publisher, Murray. The abilities, in short, which he lived to develop were as yet unsuspected—unless, perhaps, among a small circle; and the knowledge of the world, which so few men gather from anything but painful collision with various conflicting orders of their fellow-men, was not his. He was to the last plain and blunt: at this time I can easily believe him to have been so to a degree which Scott might look upon as "ungracious"—I take the epithet from one of his letters to James Ballantyne. Mr Blackwood, therefore, upon reading what seemed to him the loose and impotent conclusion of a well-begun story, did not search about for any glossy periphrase, but at once wrote to beg that James Ballantyne would inform the unknown author that such was his opinion. This might possibly have been endured; but Blackwood, feeling, I have no doubt, a genuine enthusiasm for the author's fame, as well as a just anxiety as to his own adventure, proceeded to suggest the outline of what would, in his judgment, be a better upwinding of the plot of the 'Black Dwarf,' and concluded his epistle, which he desired to be forwarded to the unknown novelist, with announcing his willingness, in case the proposed alterations were agreed to, that the whole expense of cancelling and reprinting a certain number of sheets should be charged to his own personal ac-

count with James Ballantyne & Co. His letter seems to have further indicated that he had taken counsel with some literary person, on whose taste he placed great reliance, and who, if he had not originated, had at least approved of the proposed process of recasting. Had Scott never possessed any such system of interagency as the Ballantynes supplied, he would, among other and perhaps greater inconveniences, have escaped that of the want of personal familiarity with several persons, with whose confidence—and why should I not add? with the innocent gratification of whose little vanities—his own pecuniary interests were often deeply connected. A very little personal contact would have introduced such a character as Blackwood's to the respect—nay, to the affectionate respect—of Scott, who, above all others, was ready to sympathise cordially with honest and able men, in whatever condition of life he discovered them. He did both know and appreciate Blackwood better in aftertimes; but in 1816, when this plain-spoken communication reached him, the name was little more than a name, and his answer to the most solemn of go-betweens was in these terms, which I sincerely wish I could tell how Signor Aldiborontophoscophornio translated into any dialect submissible to Blackwood's apprehension:—

Walter Scott to James Ballantyne.

"Dear James,—I have received Blackwood's impudent letter. G— d—— his soul! Tell him and his coadjutor that I belong to the Black Hussars of Literature, who neither give nor receive criticism. I'll be cursed but this is the most impudent proposal that ever was made.—W. S."

This story is exactly the kind of skilful compound of truth and imagination which has ruined the character of many a man. The fact evidently is that Blackwood did write such a piece of criticism and made such a proposal (which makes the historian hold his breath); but the house of Blackwood never have been complaisant publishers, and have always loved to say their say, some-

times very wisely. But this is all the truth there is in it, as the reader will see by the following letters. For one thing, Scott knew Blackwood very well, and had shown him every sign of respect and friendly appreciation. But this was a sharp provocation, and no doubt the above very hasty and very profane note was dashed off in the first moment of exasperation, as I daresay all of us would have been well enough inclined to do. I recollect, for my own part, to have received letters from Mr John Blackwood which would have made the use of strong language very consolatory; though after a little consideration they were generally found to be worthy of much more serious thought. But there was more in it than this. We resume the correspondence at the point where we broke off. On the 1st September James Ballantyne wrote from Kelso, during a temporary absence:—

J. Ballantyne to W. Blackwood.

Our friend Jedediah highly approves of your management in respect to the 'Tales,' and thinks your setting up a rival author an excellent thought. He leaves you at perfect liberty to present a copy of vol. i. to Mr Murray as a matter of course, and to Lord Dalhousie according to your own discretion: not doubting, however, that they will be managed with a due regard to inviolable secrecy. I have, therefore, written to Edinburgh ordering two copies to be sent to you immediately.

These copies were of course of the printed sheets, the book being not yet ready for publication. It is at this point in the correspondence that Mr Blackwood's startling criticism and suggestion should come in: but no copy seems to have been preserved of it, and we are, therefore, unable to tell except from Lockhart's

description what it was. There is no reason to suppose this was not true enough. One of Blackwood's principles, always clearly acknowledged, was his habit of "taking an interest in the literary department of my business"—so there can be little doubt that he would say his say with vigour and precision. To the letter containing these suggestions James Ballantyne replies on the 4th October 1816 with a different version of Scott's angry note :—

J. Ballantyne to W. Blackwood.

Our application to the author of 'Tales of my Landlord' has been anything but successful, and in order to explain to you the reason why I must decline to address him in this way in future, I shall copy his reply *verbatim* :—

"My respects to our friends the Booksellers. I belong to the Death-head Hussars of Literature, who neither *take* nor *give* criticism. I am extremely sorry they showed my work to Gifford, nor would I cancel a leaf to please all the critics of Edinburgh and London; and so let that be as it is. They are mistaken if they think I don't know when I am writing ill, as well as Gifford can tell me. I beg there may be no more communications with critics."

Observe—that I shall at all times be ready to convey anything from you to the author in a written form, but I do not feel warranted to interfere further.

The reader may believe that this was how Signor Aldiborontophoscophornio "translated" Scott's note "into a dialect" that could be submitted to Blackwood; but I think for my own part that there is more in it—that it was probably an amalgam of two notes, and that the reference to Gifford was genuine, and not the invention of the smooth-tongued James. The intrusion of the London critic no doubt changed the

whole face of the matter, and that this was believed to be the special sting is proved by Mr Blackwood's reply, written on the following morning, 5th October :—

W. Blackwood to James Ballantyne.

I am not a little vexed at having ventured to suggest anything to the author of 'Tales of my Landlord,' since I find he considers it in the light of *Ne sutor ultra crepidam.* I never had for one moment the vanity to think that from any poor remark of mine, or indeed of any human being, he would be induced to blot one line, or alter a single incident, unless the same idea occurred to his own powerful mind. On stating to you what struck me, and finding that your opinion coincided with mine, I was induced to request of you to state it to the author, in order that he might be aware that the expense of cancelling the sheets was no object to me. I was the more anxious to do this, in case the author should have given you the MS. of this portion of the work sooner than he intended, in order to satisfy the clamouring for it which I teased you with. I trust the author will do me the justice to believe that it is quite impossible for any one to have a higher admiration of his most extraordinary talents: and speaking merely as a bookseller, it would be quite unnecessary to be at the expense of altering one line, although the author himself (who alone can be the proper judge) should wish it, as the success of the work should be rapid, great, and certain.

With regard to the first volume being shown to Mr Gifford, I must state, in justification of Mr Murray, that Mr G. is the only friend whom he consults on all occasions, and to whom his most secret transactions are laid open. He gave him the book, not for the purpose of criticism, but that as a friend he should partake of the enjoyment he had in such an extraordinary performance. No language could be stronger than Mr Gifford's, as I mentioned to you; and as the same thing had occurred to Mr G. as to you and me, I thought there could be no harm in stating this to the author. I have only again to express my regret at what has taken place, and to beg you will communicate this to the author in any way you may think proper.

If our conjecture is true, it must be concluded that the thing most strongly and justly resented by Scott was the interposition of Gifford. Nothing could be more natural than that he should fling forth fire and flame at the thought that the chief critic of one of the literary coteries of the time had thus secretly sat upon him, in a private committee behind his back, and had it in his power to shake his head in solemn doubt as to the prowess and success of the author of 'Waverley.' It was a thought full of exasperation to a man little used to criticism in any form. But whether Lockhart was mistaken as to the note he quotes, or whether that first sharp volley of expletives was but a first explosion on the moment, followed by the other, we have no means of knowing. No one but Murray could have known the exact facts, and even by him they would seem to have been forgotten or imperfectly apprehended. "I remember nothing but that one of the proudest days of my life was that on which I published the first 'Tales of my Landlord,' and a vague notion that I owed the dropping of my connection with the great novelist to some trashy disputes between Blackwood and the Ballantynes," is the only explanation given by Mr Murray as reported by Lockhart, which was scarcely a correct statement. "If he had been at all consulted about it (which I much doubt)," says Lockhart. But it could scarcely be forgotten that the little incident about Mr Gifford was one of the causes, at least, of Scott's resentment. The latter part of the story is set forth very distinctly in the letters now discovered; and it is interesting to trace this episode to its end.

The success of the 'Tales of my Landlord' left nothing to be desired. The 'Black Dwarf' was finally published on the 1st December 1816, and on December 13 Murray wrote to Blackwood recommending him "to go on printing as many and as fast as you can; for we certainly need not stop until we come to the end of our unfortunately limited 6000. My copies," he adds, "are more than gone, and if you have any to spare pray send them up instantly."

Before, however, the actual moment of publication, Blackwood thus emits his note of subdued exaltation. It is dated the 22d November 1816:—

W. Blackwood to J. Ballantyne.

I send you two copies of our glorious book for the author, one of which I have no doubt he will present Mr Ballantyne with, else I should have done myself that pleasure. I need not tell you that any copies he wishes to present will be at all times at his command. I hope he will pardon me for having sent the very first copy I had done to Mr Scott. The next I will send to the author of 'Julia de Roubigné.'

Written on the back of this is the following "note to Mr Scott." The transparent mystery of the authorship of 'Waverley' could not be more amusingly shown than by the copies under cover mysteriously sent to the mysterious author on one side, and the fine candid "first copy to Mr Scott" on the other.

It is with no small satisfaction [writes the publisher to the latter personage] that I send you the first perfect copy I have got of the 'Tales of my Landlord.' If Jedediah interests the public at all in the way he has interested (you will excuse me for saying) his fortunate publisher, he will be the most successful editor who has almost ever appeared.

It is characteristic of Blackwood's modesty and self-restraint that these are the only direct congratulations we find on his part. Mr Murray wrote in a much more effusive tone to Scott, and his letter has found a place both in Lockhart's 'Life' and in the 'Book of Murray.' It is—besides being, no doubt, a very genuine expression of his own delight and triumph—a clever attempt to "draw" the author, who, however, was too old a bird to be beguiled. The London publisher begins by thanking Mr Scott—"although I dare not address you as the author of certain Tales (which, however, must be written either by Walter Scott or the devil") for at least his influence with the author, to which "I am indebted for the essential honour of being one of their publishers"; and offers him "most hearty thanks—not divided, but doubled—alike for my worldly gain therein, and for the great acquisition of professional reputation which their publication has already procured me":

J. Murray to Walter Scott.

As to delight, I believe I could, under any oath that could be proposed, swear that I never had experienced such great and unmixed pleasure in my life as the reading of this exquisite work has afforded me; and if you witnessed the wet eyes and quivering cheeks with which, as the author's chamberlain, I receive the unanimous and vehement praise of them from every one who has read them, or heard the curses of those whose needs my scanty supply would not satisfy, you might judge of the sincerity with which I now entreat you to assure the author of the most complete success. After this I could throw all the other books I have in the press into the Thames, for no one will either read them or buy. Lord Holland said, when I asked his opinion, "Opinion! we did not one of us go to bed all night, and nothing slept but my gout."

There is, though perhaps only suggested by Mr Murray's after-forgetfulness, a whimsical suggestion that "Codlin's the friend" in this enthusiastic epistle. Scott was by this time accustomed to much flattery on all sides, and to hear that men, to whom all the usual experiences of life had come, had never known "such great and unmixed pleasure in all their life" as in the reading of his last book; at which we can well understand how that most natural of men smiled, and turning to the quite other side of the question, bid John Ballantyne mind his ways, with the carol of an old ballad—

> "Consider weel, gudeman,
> We hae but borrowed gear;
> The horse that I ride on
> It is John Murray's mear."

Murray's letter would seem to have suggested to Scott the delightful jest of reviewing his own works in the ensuing number of the 'Quarterly,' for which periodical it was so essential always to secure his support.

But it would not appear that the London publisher was always so convinced of the real authorship of these works as he professes to be: for in one of the letters in which he informs his partner in Edinburgh of the rapid sale of their book he begins by confirming—"*in the greatest confidence*"—a suggestion already made by Blackwood: "I have discovered the author of all those novels to be Thomas Scott, Walter Scott's brother. I make no doubt that Mr Walter Scott did a great deal to the first 'Waverley,' from his anxiety to serve his brother, but you may rely upon the certainty of what I have told you." Murray then adds:—

"The whole country is starving for want of a Compleat Supply of 'Tales of my Landlord,' respecting the interest and merit of which there continues to be but one sentiment. I make no doubt that you are urging on the printing of new editions, which may not stop, I calculate, until it arrives at about the Eighth. As I told you in my last, I have never had any copies left a day on my hands, and all that you have been so good as to get for me have been bespoken."

"Notwithstanding this rapid success," Lockhart adds, "circumstances ere long occurred which carried the publication into the hands of Constable." These circumstances are made sufficiently plain by the correspondence between Blackwood and Ballantyne which winds up this transaction. It is evident enough from the beginning that as long as the author of 'Waverley' did not choose to disclose the secret of his identity to any other publisher, it was much easier and better on the whole to fall back upon Constable, who knew, than to continue to negotiate painfully through James Ballantyne, in whom the more serious business men of "the Trade" had little confidence, and who was not a satisfactory medium on either side. The conclusion was inevitable, however much to be regretted. The method, however, of the severance was as follows. The discussion which brought it about began with the following letter, dated 20th January 1817:—

J. Ballantyne to W. Blackwood.

As the last edition of the 'Tales' to which our bargain was extended is now nearly finished, and a new one—I hope many new ones—will probably soon be wanted, I hasten to say that

it will be delivered to you as soon as it can be got ready, on the single condition that you take the £200 additional from the stock of John Ballantyne & Co., which the error of their clerk prevented you from taking when the bills were granted in terms of the original bargain. To this I feel assured that you will not object, as it is a very light rider indeed upon a transaction which hitherto has proved so remarkably advantageous; and I will thank you to inform me upon the subject when you have consulted Mr Murray."

It is to be supposed that this extension of the bargain was accepted, notwithstanding the curious "rider," which was exacted in all these bargains, for the dispersion of John Ballantyne's unfortunate stock, the relics of his still more unfortunate arrested business as a bookseller,—stock which Scott jocularly writes to him must now be

"Wearin' awa, John,
Like snaw-wreaths when it's thaw, John"—

and which certainly seems to have possessed some features of the widow's cruse. In the meantime, however, the sale of the 'Black Dwarf' appears to have slackened before the third edition was exhausted; and on perceiving this the publishers prudently determined to postpone the printing of the fourth. But their intimation to this effect does not seem to have been well received.

J. Ballantyne to W. Blackwood.

The 4th edition of the 'Tales' was completed, except the working off of a very few sheets, before the receipt of your letter desiring it might be stopped. It is now therefore on the eve of being ready for delivery. I have forwarded your letter to the author, and shall of course be regulated by his instructions as to what is now to be done.

To this startling intimation Mr Blackwood replied on the same day, 7th April 1817:—

I am rather surprised at your thinking it necessary to send my letter to the author of the 'Tales.' Mr Murray and I expected it [the edition] would have been called for ere now, but have been mistaken, and I told you several weeks ago not to hurry. We had the strongest interest, and surely must be the best judges when a new edition is necessary. We hope this will very soon be the case; but while we have 600 or 700 in hand it is not to be thought of. The only inconvenience that can arise is as to the paper for a few weeks, and our friends Messrs Cowan are always leisurely in this respect.

Again on the same day Ballantyne replies:—

I confess I do not see why you should be surprised at my sending an extract of your letter respecting the 'Tales' to the author. His interest is most naturally concerned in knowing when editions are wanted, and at the time you ordered the 4th to go to press I informed him that you had done so. When you told me not to be in a hurry, I also acquainted him with this; and when you desired me to suspend the printing till further orders, I communicated that also. Surely this was all very natural and proper.

What I now have it in commission from the author to say is this: and I beg you to observe that I have no discretionary power in the matter. When you desired me not to be in a hurry with the 4th edition, I was obliged of course to use my own discretion as to the latitude conveyed by your instructions. The 3d edition having been printed in little more than five weeks, I believed that I should comply with the spirit of your letter if I got the 4th done in nine—which was taking the work easily, neither hurrying nor retarding it. The author, who had an interest in knowing these matters, was, of course, informed by me, upon his inquiring about it, that the edition would be ready on the 12th or 15th of the present month, and as a very considerable sum is exigible [*sic*] by him upon the edition, he made his pecuniary arrangements depend upon that sum being

paid him at the period I told him the edition would be ready. You will thus see that the disappointment would have a more extensive influence than with regard to the paper only. You will recollect that, previously to the ordering of this edition, I wrote to you that the author had stipulated that the bills for his profits should be granted at 6 instead of 12 months, renewable at your expense for 6 months longer. Now he is willing to agree to take bills at 9 in place of 6 months, in order to give full time for the sale of the remaining books in hand. This you will observe has the same effect as if I had taken five months to print the work, which assuredly would not have been hurrying it. As the author's instructions are full and precise to the above effect, I shall hope to have the pleasure of hearing from you as soon as possible upon the subject.

Mr Blackwood replied :—

I shall communicate to Mr Murray the contents of your letter of yesterday, which I have just received, and as soon as I hear from him will let you know the result of our deliberation. I would also beg the favour of you to assure the author that nothing would give me more pain (and I may say the same of Mr Murray) than putting him to any inconvenience. You have never had an hour to wait for a settlement hitherto, and I hope he will do me the justice to believe that he will not have any reason for complaint in our further transactions.

To this Ballantyne answers, acknowledging fully that he has never had to wait an hour for a settlement; and there abruptly the discussion ends for the time. Whether the sale quickened again so as to make the postponement unnecessary, or the publishers preferred to risk a possible loss rather than endanger their connection with "the author," we are not informed. But, at all events, the fourth edition, though considered by Messrs Blackwood and Murray as unduly hurried, was eventually published by them, and things went on quietly until more than a year later,

when I find the sequel and conclusion of the transaction in a correspondence between Murray and Blackwood, containing a packet of letters which had passed between the latter and James Ballantyne. A sudden thunderbolt had fallen into the peaceful air, in the shape of an advertisement of a fifth edition as about to be issued by Constable, without warning given to the original publishers or any preparation for such an announcement:—

W. Blackwood to James Ballantyne.

6th May 1817.

I was so completely surprised, and I must say indignant, yesterday, when I saw in your paper an advertisement announcing the publication of a new edition of the first 'Tales of my Landlord,' that had I written at the moment I might have given way to feelings that would not have been pleasant to either of us. My opinion of the matter is not now one whit altered, but I trust I shall be able to state it more calmly.

In the first place, then, I beg to say that as I have upwards of 1200 copies here, and as I believe Mr Murray has also some hundreds of the fourth edition on hand, a new edition was quite uncalled for and unnecessary; and you, besides, were not entitled to put a new edition to the press without having first consulted us, and ascertained that our stock was nearly exhausted.

In the next place, I beg to say that, even had another edition been required, Mr Murray and I were both by courtesy and right entitled to the first offer of it. I was surely entitled to expect this from the repeated assurances you gave me that the author was perfectly willing, after our stipulated number was exhausted, that the future editions should go on with us, exactly on the same terms. . . . As another edition, however, is unfortunately not yet required, it is unnecessary for us to discuss this last point at present, and I therefore return to the first point—the state of the fourth edition. From this you must see the necessity of instantly repairing the injury which has

been done Mr Murray and me by allowing the advertisement to appear, or any copies of a fifth edition to be sold while we have such a heavy stock on hand, even waiving any claim we may have upon a fifth edition when it is wanted.

To this the printer, always so full of resource in the way of excuses, answers with the following quite inconsequent and unsatisfactory reply. After repeating Mr Blackwood's argument that the fifth edition ought not to have been put to press till the fourth was exhausted, he exculpates himself in the following exasperating fashion :—

J. Ballantyne to W. Blackwood.

To this I answer that I did not put this edition to press—that is, in the sense in which you use these words: as a printer I obeyed the orders of the bookseller to whom the edition had been sold, and was not called upon to consult anybody.

You next state that had another edition been required, Mr Murray and you were, both by courtesy and right, entitled to the first offer of it.

The answer to this is most easy on my part, and can hardly, I should think, be regarded even by yourself as anything else than entirely conclusive. I am not called upon to discuss how far Mr Murray and you were entitled to have the first offer of any new edition, because I had no power to make this offer either to you or to anybody else. As agent for the author, I transacted with you for the edition prior to that which is now advertised; but the author has long since changed his agent, and I assert in the most unqualified terms that the bargain for the present edition had been concluded for many weeks before I had even heard that it was in contemplation. How, then, can I be made responsible for a transaction over which I had not only no manner of control, but of which I did not hear until it was concluded? I appeal to your candour.

This very irritating mode of begging the question is, however, followed by an admission of the real prin-

ciple of the case, which shows that Mr Blackwood was right in his surmise that the intention of the premature advertisement was to buy out the interest which he and Mr Murray held in this much-discussed publication. Ballantyne adds:—

I beg to reply that any injury that may have arisen from this transaction to Mr Murray or you is not imputable to me, but that it appears common justice and common sense that this last edition should not come into the market until the stock in hand shall be sold off or otherwise settled, so that you may be no loser. As I am the only person with whom you can transact in this matter, I shall lose not a moment in transmitting either your present letter or a more formal claim on your part (as you think best) to the author. Nothing will give me more pleasure, nor is there anything which I can consider as more a duty, than that I should give you every aid in my power to arrange this matter, so as to prevent your being losers by the edition which you purchased.

Mr Blackwood's reply was naturally an angry one. As a matter of course, he repudiates Ballantyne's somewhat impudent argument as to not being any longer the agent of the mysterious author:—

W. Blackwood to J. Ballantyne.

I admit most freely that if you stood in the capacity of a mere printer, it was your business to execute the order without consulting B. or any other letter of the alphabet. The present case, however, is very different. We entered into a transaction, relying upon each other as men of business and character who would honourably and fairly fulfil our mutual engagements. The author might change as often as he pleased, but he had no right to do the smallest act which might interfere with any arrangement which you had contracted in his name, and with his authority. I need hardly repeat what you seem to be sensible of, that the publication of this fifth edition (at all

events in present circumstances) is in direct violation of our bargain. Therefore, as you are the only person I have to look to for reparation, the author will (no doubt) instantly do you justice by extricating you from the very awkward situation in which he has placed you.

However much deference I might have shown to any request or any arrangement which the author might have proposed to me in a proper manner, yet you will not wonder that now I will not give up any claims or compensation I may think myself entitled to, nor will I allow myself or my rights, even by Him, to be trampled upon, as I conceive has been attempted to be done by this unwarrantable publication. I have no formal proposal to make: it is for the author to do so through you.

The smart encounter between the very spirited publisher and his plausible friend of the printing-office here pauses; and in Blackwood's report to his partner in London there occur a series of dramatic scenes between publisher and lawyers, the latter advancing and retiring with true legal skill. At first they agree entirely and astutely with the indignant complainant, suggesting that it is clearly a case for an Injunction to prevent the publication of the uncalled-for edition, and for damages.

W. Blackwood to John Murray.

14*th May* 1817.

They are quite decided and clear as to our grounds for applying for heavy damages on account of the copies we have on hand, and that it is not enough to tell us that the copies would all be taken off our hands, because, independent of the profit we expected to make by their sale, we are entitled to say it is for the advantage to our business derived from the credit of publishing such a work that we paid the sums of money we did. They are not, however, so clear with regard to our legal right of publishing future editions, and they are to consider this

point also. They are, however, quite clear as to our right in equity and honour.

Subsequent consultations, however, show a gradual drawing in from the original boldness of this advice. Two days after the lawyers consider the Injunction unnecessary, but still think an action for damages the proper mode of procedure. It is seldom that we can follow this moderating process so clearly. On the 19th May the summons was prepared to commence the action, and a copy enclosed to Mr Murray; but the lawyers (wise men, who knew this to be impossible!) thought it better first to "make a demand for the name of the author from Mr Ballantyne." On the same day Ballantyne transmits the answer of the author, who acknowledges no "right whatever" in the claim upon further editions of the 'Tales,' but has "no hesitation in admitting that your copies must be taken off your hands; and I am authorised to say that they will all be repurchased from you upon reasonable terms." This offer, however, does not please either publishers, or apparently lawyers, for the time. Murray would seem still to have inclined towards an Injunction; but Blackwood wavered, with still a sense of offence obscuring his sound judgment—though he is the first to suggest that subscription price for the copies in hand would be the fairest settlement. "My first idea was the same as yours, to put a complete stop to the selling of the piracy, and finish the transaction in this way," he says in his letter to Murray; but further thought modified the conviction. For a short time both partners, however, held by the idea of damages as a punishment for the apparent breach of contract; but again the lawyers

came in, and more peaceful counsels prevailed. The final argument, which quieted the wounded spirit at least on Mr Blackwood's part, was this:—

W. Blackwood to John Murray.

Had it gone on it would have made a complete breach with Mr Scott, which would have been more hurtful than the loss of the difference of our claim. Both from what I have heard from his friends, and from what has occurred lately to myself, I saw that he did not wish any difference should take place.

To Ballantyne, accordingly, he wrote on the 3d July, announcing his desire "to close amicably this unfortunate business" by accepting subscription price for the stock of books, which the other party had offered. "In this I have been regulated by the strong feeling I have with regard to 'the Author,'" he says. Even to the disappointed and outraged publisher, who had been, it must be allowed, rather scurvily treated, the spell of Scott's name was too strong to permit his sacred shield to be touched. With Constable and Ballantyne, let us also be sure, the blame lay.

In this way "the fortunate publishers," who had so rejoiced and triumphed over their mysterious author, and exchanged all the surmises of the times as to his real personality, with unconcealed delight in their connection with him, were for ever severed from his great and troubled career. This, one cannot but feel, was one of those tragically insignificant circumstances which so often shape life apart from any consciousness of ours. Probably ruin would never have overtaken Sir Walter had he been in the steady and careful hands of Murray and Blackwood, for it is un-

likely that even the glamour of the great Magician would have turned heads so reasonable and sober. We can only remind ourselves in consolation that Scott in that case would probably not have been the man we know. He might have died serenely, the fortunate and safe Baronet of Abbotsford, with no shadow of tragedy upon him. But, on the other hand, that sublime and wonderful struggle—and the Journal, unparalleled record of the noblest and saddest ordeal — would never have been. Would we have saved him this if we could, to our own infinite loss? I know not. It would have been a great self-denial had the world had any say in the matter, for it would have been a distinct impoverishment to us all.

Other smarts besides those which came from the author's side were involved in the transaction. Murray, who in reality was slow in agreeing to the amicable settlement of the matter, and who had been responsible in a great degree by his unpunctuality in correspondence for the delay of the second edition, had blamed Blackwood for putting it to press on his own responsibility; while Blackwood had been wounded by his unusual conduct in sending information concerning the progress of the book in London to James Ballantyne, while remaining silent to his partner in the venture. The following remonstrance is temperate, but shows the wound:—

W. Blackwood to John Murray.

Mr Ballantyne read me the interesting account contained in your letter to him. The only remark I shall make upon your writing so fully to him and so briefly to me is that I think,

placed in your circumstances, I should have felt myself bound in honour to have addressed this information in the first place to my partner in the Book, who had obtained for me a share in it, and who I knew would instantly communicate every syllable to the persons interested in it. Men differ, however, in their views of these matters. I hope we will be able to get up an article for the Review which will redeem the former ones. Mr Scott also told me about the very satisfactory letters he had from you.

I need not tell you how cordially I agree with you in thinking that this work is one of the most extraordinary that has appeared in our times. I reckon it one of the proudest things in my life to have attained it. I laboured for many years through many difficulties and many discouragements to accomplish something of this kind. I had always your interest in it as much at heart as my own, though I never received assistance from you of any kind to forward my views, only that my connection with you may be considered to have been of general use to me. At last I did obtain the prize I had been so long striving for; and now when it has turned out so much greater than my most sanguine expectations, and when I might have flattered myself with having some credit as well as favour with you for what I had done, and I may add suffered in the cause, I have short querulous letters. But this is a most unpleasing as well as ungrateful subject. I hope in God we shall be done with it either in one way or another. I have not time for long letters, and I cannot afford the time and thought that these disagreeable dissensions cause. If I answered your letter at all, I felt I could not do justice to myself or you without entering into this long detail. I have kept a straightforward course, and can lay my hand on my heart and say that to the best of my judgment I have always made your concerns my own, and have thought no work too much, or any exertion too great, that could be of the smallest use to them. It is no small satisfaction to my own mind that whatever disagreeable things have occurred in the course of our connection I have never at any time slackened my exertions as your agent, whatever credit I may have had from them.

From the first, however, and even when Blackwood had realised his hope of "getting a book or two to throw in one's way," it will be seen that the great London publisher sometimes treated his partner *de haut en bas*, in a manner not agreeable to a man of Blackwood's high spirit. Murray either wrapt himself in silence, not answering the frequent questions to be asked or mutual interests to be discussed, which are necessary in every business arrangement—or made brief communications by the hand of a clerk, or replied in a few hurried and offhand words to the long epistles and elaborate explanations of the other. At other times he was touchy and ready to take offence, especially when, by reason of delay on his part, matters had to be settled without him. A number of bickerings, to which we can scarcely give a more dignified name, went on in the background, even while there was the closest union of interests. But no purpose can be served in raking up these old quarrels. They went on with a sort of friendly hostility at bottom, breaking out now and then into fire and flame, sometimes giving rise to affecting reconciliations, sometimes to periods of estrangement, as so many connections, business and otherwise, unfortunately do.

As for Scott, for whose spotless reputation everybody is concerned, my own opinion is that his venture with these two new publishers was tentative, and it was quite on the cards that they might have secured him, but for this irritating check: while on the other hand it was also quite natural that he should have found the burden of James Ballantyne's mediatorship unbearable, and felt that, without an additional disclosure of his secret, which, whether wisely or

foolishly, he was determined not to make, his simplest method was to return to the man who did already know, and with whom he could arrange at first hand, without any interference of a fussy though bland go-between. Neither Murray nor Blackwood throw any individual blame upon him, and he was, strictly speaking, within his rights in transferring the book, as he had expressly limited the arrangement to certain editions. The offensive announcement of a fifth edition before the fourth was exhausted was no doubt due to Constable, who thus celebrated his triumph over his rivals.

It was thus that this tantalising episode came to an end.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAGAZINE.

'THE EDINBURGH MONTHLY MAGAZINE'—INCOMPETENCY AND TREACHERY OF THE EDITORS, PRINGLE AND CLEGHORN—THEY SECEDE TO CONSTABLE—WILSON, LOCKHART, AND HOGG RALLY ROUND BLACKWOOD—NO MORE MEDIOCRITY—BLACKWOOD BECOMES HIS OWN EDITOR—COMPOSITION OF THE CHALDEE MANUSCRIPT—THE FIRST NUMBER OF 'BLACKWOOD'—EXTRAORDINARY EFFECT OF THE *JEU D'ESPRIT*.

BLACKWOOD had now arrived at a point in his life when impatience of a monotonous career, and that desire to "make a spoon or spoil a horn" which is so strong among those predestined to fortune, had risen to fever-point within him. He was impatient of bookselling and of the moderate risks and rewards of a humdrum publishing business, especially after his disappointment in respect to the 'Waverley' series; and all his faculties were on the watch for an opportunity to step forth from the usual routine, and make a distinct place for himself. The method in which it was easy and natural to do this is indicated in a curious letter addressed to him by Murray, whose relations with the Edinburgh publisher were so varied and often full of friendly feeling, though broken by occasional misunderstandings and makings-up. Murray seems

to have assumed an attitude of superiority, as of a man of much greater experience and knowledge of the world, which, though probably quite justifiable from his point of view, must often have been exasperating to one so independent and high-spirited as William Blackwood, fully conscious of being as good a judge in his own case and perhaps a better man of business than his irregular and dilatory correspondent. In one of the many recapitulations of the services rendered by each to the other, in which both Blackwood and Murray were wont to indulge, each with an aggrieved tone and sense more or less of ingratitude on the part of the other, there occurs the following statement of what the great man of Albemarle Street considered it expedient for his colleague and opponent to do, and also of the manner in which it ought to be done (which was a different matter), in strict alliance with and submission to ME :—

John Murray to W. Blackwood.

My advice has, I believe, mainly assisted in determining you to change your late situation of business. In your present establishment you may improve to a most valuable extent the foundations already laid of a solid retail business, which in a few years may be consigned to the care of attentive clerks, while you will be gradually from this time rising into the higher duties of cultivating the young men of Genius of the day, whom your present situation and literary attractions and attentions of all kinds will indisputably draw around you. If you are confidential and liberal in your communications with me upon the subject of the works which may present themselves in this way, you may rest assured that it may lead to more incalculable advantages to you. But I will venture to tell you what you must *not* do. You must not, as in a recent instance, calculate upon gaining £10 more or less by keeping the whole of one little volume to yourself, but estimate to what

an extent of publication you may proceed by dividing your risque and the very increased profits which may arise thereby by commanding the whole range of the English market. Constable is so fully aware of the importance of creating a powerful interest in a bookseller here, that he has not in any instance engaged in one book of which he has not offered a share to a London publisher. With regard to the 'White Cottage,' your proposal to me should have been something like this: "It is the work of a very ingenious man who does not desire his name to be known, and therefore I mention it to you in the most honourable confidence. The work itself is very respectable, and it promises more from the same person, who will, I think, prove a valuable connexion. I have it upon such and such terms, and if you like to join with me I shall be very happy thus to increase your exertions." It is not the little profits of this little volume, if it sell, that should be thought of, but what must be gained on a large scale by the additional capital, divided risque, and moral certainty of extensive success.

The volume thus unjustly withheld from Mr Murray was a little tale by one Arthur Mower, who is jocularly alluded to in the Chaldee Manuscript. It evidently did not take the world by storm or set the Firth of Forth on fire. There is a certain tone in the complaint, at once aggrieved and dictatorial, which is more amusing than probably the 'White Cottage' was; and the occupation recommended of cultivating young men of genius was one which Blackwood proceeded to carry out in a way which afterwards produced many shocks and great alarm in the bosom of his adviser.

The early years of the century, which now had reached the seventeenth summer of its youth, had introduced, amid its many other developments, the new form of the periodical to the world. The flying sheet of the 'Tatler,' followed by *Spectators* and a lessening tribe, had taught the lively sub-

jects of Queen Anne to look forward to a delightful stimulant of news and criticism along with their chocolate of a morning on certain happy days; but it was only in the nineteenth century that the serious Review had begun its being. Everybody knows, as one of the most romantic episodes of literary history, the reckless, youthful, light-hearted enterprise got up among a few clever young men, much desiring both money and fame, but a little fun and excitement above all, and delighted by the idea of setting up an irresponsible tribunal, and judging those who by nature had the gift of judging and condemning them. That a great organ of opinion, both political and literary, and an important commercial speculation, bringing large practical recompense, should have grown out of the merry meeting round Jeffrey's dinner-table, would probably have surprised the originators of the 'Edinburgh Review' as much as it did the world which it took by storm. But success came so quickly at their call that they set the fashion, and became a kind of model for other undertakings opposed to them in every point except the talent, the youth, and the rashness,—the last quality particularly taking the mind of the time, like the dash of one of the famous regiments of the great, just concluded war, which were the more popular with the country in proportion to the impetuous impulse with which they rode down everything before them.

The Whig Review had been in a great measure a revolt against the unbroken rule of the Tory in literature and life. But in the revolution which soon after occurred, and in which the Whigs came to the top and

absorbed everything, it became intolerable on the Tory side that such an organ should hold the field in literary matters; and the necessity of a periodical to support other interests, and assert the right of the constitutional party to an equal hearing, was very clearly seen. It is true that the 'Quarterly Review' was formerly the rival and chief opponent of the great organ of the Liberals; but it was perhaps, as we have indicated, too ponderous from the beginning, too sober, dignified, and middle-aged, lacking the dash and the fiery energy of the other, coming too gently into the world to strike any exhilarating note upon the public ear. It made its mark, but not as its opponent, without any of the sensation and stir which the 'Edinburgh Review' had called forth. The true champion and challenger of Jeffrey and his men—as dauntless and inconsiderate of all secondary motives as their beginning had been, as rash, spontaneous, and brilliant—was yet to seek.

That this should come in the shape of an Edinburgh Magazine,—something not so ponderous, more nimble, more frequent, more familiar,—was a thought that had been for some time vaguely forming in Blackwood's brain. And perhaps the startling consciousness of a fall, which the energetic young publisher had received after the failure of all his hopes in respect to Scott, pricked him to another effort which would make him forgive himself for his want of success, and carry conviction to every looker-on that he was not a man to be foiled. Constable, his rival, who had just gained what could scarcely help seeming to both a victory over him in respect to the 'Tales of my Landlord,' possessed not only the 'Edinburgh Review' itself,

"the horn" in which lay his strength, but also a feeble little 'Scots Magazine,' of which there was little to be said in one way or another. No doubt, however, the existence of that small periodical, and the hope of cutting the ground from under its publisher's feet, had something to do with the eagerness with which Blackwood at last began to carry out his slumbering design.

There is not much information as to the manner in which he was brought into contact with Messrs Pringle and Cleghorn, the two gentlemen who became the joint editors of the 'Edinburgh Monthly Magazine.' By some it is said to have been with them that the idea originated; while Hogg, then very much *en evidence* about Edinburgh, having actually a hand in most things that were going on, and supposing himself to have much more, was of opinion that the original conception was his own. It is most probable that it was he who introduced the two pseudo-literary men to the publisher. Pringle was from Hogg's own country, a rustic genius like himself, though of superior education; and Cleghorn was known as the editor of a Farmer's Magazine, probably therefore a countryman too. Of the two it was Pringle, the younger and gentler, who was the favourite, and he alone had any pretensions to literature; but it is evident that he was dominated by the stronger spirit of the other, and swept away by his influence. On the face of it, the expedient of a joint-editorship does not seem a happy idea, and the business arrangements were apparently of a most peculiar kind. The publisher and the two editors would appear to have entered into a sort of copartnership, they undertaking to find the necessary

literary provision for the periodical, while he took the risk and expense of the printing and publishing. The profits were then to be divided between them. Who was to pay the contributors, or if they were content to remain without remuneration, we are not told. In those days it was considered right at all events to say, and if possible to believe, that literature was superior to payment, and that to imagine a man of genius as capable of being stirred up to composition by any thought of pecuniary reward was an insulting and degrading suggestion — an idea in which a fanciful spectator would fain take refuge once more, in face of a generation which weighs out its thousand words across the counter, with the affectation of finding in sale and barter its only motive. It is stated in one of the letters that the expectation of the editors was to receive jointly a sum of about £50 monthly when the sale of the Magazine reached 2000 copies,—matters being much simplified, as the reader will perceive, by this high generosity on the part of the contributors; but the demand for the Magazine does not seem ever to have risen above 2500 copies, a sale which would hardly content any publisher nowadays.

The Magazine, however, did not last long enough to have time for development. The editors already had begun to complain piteously of the publisher's interference in the second number. He who had incurred the loss of the greatest of literary labourers by his habit of stating his opinion,—who had freely criticised Scott, besides braving the anger of two such important authorities in Edinburgh as Henry Mackenzie and Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe,—was not likely

to allow his fine fancy of a Magazine, as powerful and as vivacious as the 'Edinburgh Review,' and in everything strongly opposed to that great Liberal organ, to sink into insignificance, or to put up with the meek and mild miscellany of which he now found himself the publisher. By the month of July he had discovered that he had enough of Mr Pringle and Mr Cleghorn, or at least of the latter, and when the third number was ready he gave the three months' notice which was necessary, according to the agreement, for breaking the partnership. For this there were many very evident reasons. In the first place, Blackwood was and always remained a high Tory, holding the 'Edinburgh Review' and all its works in abhorrence; whereas the publication issued under the cover of his name found nothing more expedient than to fill its first number with a panegyric on Francis Horner, one of Jeffrey's most pragmatical lieutenants, and to applaud the wisdom and skill of that periodical; and, secondly, the publication altogether was a weak and washy production, little likely to do either publisher or writers much credit. There was no doubt another reason, not apparent, which was quite as effectual as either of these.

Like the other publishers of the age, it had been Blackwood's desire from the beginning to make his place of business a centre of literary society, a sort of literary club where men of letters might find a meeting-place. Murray in London employed the drawing-rooms of his house, which was in those days over the shop—an honest word, which nobody shirked—for this purpose. But Blackwood's house was at some distance, and the large rooms at Princes

Street were well adapted for their many and much-mingled guests. There accordingly many men of note assembled, and among them certain young heroes, advocates and others, not yet of much note, to turn over the books and hear the news and tell each other all manner of stories. One of them, afterwards to bear an important part in this history, has given a very vivid description of the scene in 'Peter's Letters.' Among the frequenters of this lively company were two young men who would have been remarkable anywhere, if only for their appearance and talk, had nothing more remarkable ever been developed in them, —one a young man of grand form and mien, with the thews and sinews of an athlete, and a front like Jove, to threaten and command. Jove is not often portrayed with waving yellow locks and ruddy countenance, yet no smaller semblance would be a fit image for the northern demigod with those brilliant blue eyes which are almost more effective in penetrating keenness than the dark ones with which that quality is more frequently associated. He was a genial giant, but not a mild one. Genius and fun and wit were no less a part of his nature than wrath and vehemence, and a power of swift and sudden slaughter, corrected in its turn by a large radiance of gaiety and good humour—sudden in all things, ready to fell an intruder to the earth or to welcome him as a brother, swift to slay, yet instant to relent.

The other, who divided with him the honours of this witty meeting, was John Wilson's opposite in everything. He was slim and straight and self-contained, a man of elegance and refinement — words dear to the time—in mind as in person, dark of hair

and fine of feature, more like a Spaniard than a Saxon, a perfect contrast to the Berserker hero by his side. They were both of that class which we flatter ourselves in Scotland produces many of the finest flowers of humanity, the mingled product of the double nation — pure Scot by birth and early training, with the additional polish and breadth of the highest English education: Glasgow College, as it was then usual to call that abode of learning, with Oxford University to complete and elaborate the strain. Wilson was of Magdalen, Lockhart of Balliol, a Snell scholar, the best that Scotland could send to England. The career of both had been perhaps more brilliant than studious; but both had left Oxford in all the glories of success, first-class men, the pride of dons and tutors.

They had both come to Edinburgh a year or two before — Lockhart in the fulfilment of his natural career, Wilson in consequence of the loss of his fortune. Wilson was considerably the elder of the two, and had enjoyed a few careless happy years at his house of Elleray on Windermere, a young married man, writing poetry, and with no anxiety about his career, before he lost his money and was obliged to turn to work as a source of income. They were both newly fledged advocates, members of the numberless and jocular band who trod the courts of the Parliament-House, waiting for the briefs which there, as elsewhere, are so slow to come. Little recked these young and laughing philosophers of the absence of fees and steady work. They were young enough to prefer their freedom and boundless opportunity of making fun of everybody to all that was serious and useful.

Lockhart was a caricaturist of no small powers. Both of them were only too keen to see the ludicrous aspect of everything, and the age gave them an extraordinary licence in expressing it—a licence incomprehensible to us nowadays, and which is nowhere so tempting, as it is nowhere so dangerous, as in a small community where everybody knows everybody, and personal allusions are instantly taken up and understood. This pair of friends met almost daily in Mr Blackwood's saloon in Princes Street, or came together arm-in-arm from the Parliament-House, in their high collars and resplendent shirt-frills and Hessian boots. The boots form a splendid feature in the caricature-sketches, in which Lockhart represents himself stiff and straight, with the little tassels bobbing at his knees. Such was the costume of the day, and such were the heroes of Edinburgh youth, men of endless faculty and inextinguishable mirth, men neither ungenial nor ungenerous, yet unable to deny themselves a jest, and tempted to find in the outcries of their victims rather a relish the more to their sometimes cruel fun than an argument to give it up.

With two such young men under his hand, ready for anything—as astonishing in their bursts of energy as in their boundless capacity for idling, and eager to carry out any freak which promised sport—Blackwood had naturally the strongest light by which to see the shortcomings of his dull editors, who moulded painfully under his vexed and impatient observation the dullest of inconsequent Magazines, instead of the brilliant organ he had dreamed of. To think of these mild men as leading a rival band to that of Jeffrey

was absurd. They had neither spirit nor energy for the position; and soon, according to the tale, they lost even the care and industry which might have made it possible for the sober periodical to go on. So early as the second number Mr Blackwood's patience gave way, and his propensity to interfere, to take, as he himself explained it, "an interest in the literary part of his business," irritated the editors, who made an attempt to keep the publisher "in his place," which was not very successful. He whom even the spell of 'Waverley' could not silence, was not likely to respect the autocracy of a couple of incapable editors; and when the third number came out he could bear it no longer. He gave notice accordingly, which was strictly in order, by the terms of the agreement, that with the sixth number the existing arrangements must come to an end. He describes the situation in the following letter to Messrs Baldwin, Cradock, & Co., in London, who were among the number of his agents there:—

EDINBURGH, 23*d July* 1817.

I am sorry to inform you that I have been obliged to resolve upon stopping the Magazine with No. 6. I have been much disappointed in my editors, who have done little in the way of writing or procuring contributions. Ever since the work began I have had myself almost the whole burden of procuring contributions, which by great exertions I got from my own friends, while at the same time I had it not in my power to pay for them, as by our agreement the editors were to furnish me with the whole of the materials, for which and their editorial labours they were to receive half of the profits of the work. I found this would never do, and that the work would soon sink, as I could not permit my friends (who have in fact made the work what it is) to go on in this way for any length of time. Besides the labour and anxiety it cost me, it has com-

pletely interfered with my other business. I therefore entered into a negotiation with Mr Pringle, the editor, whom I wished to retain, both on account of personal friendship, and that I expected he would soon become much more useful when he had more experience, and when the editorial duty devolved upon himself alone. I had every reason to expect we should have made a comforable arrangement by which we should have secured a certain number of regular contributors, whom we would have paid at once. With this view I gave a notice, according to our agreement, that the work would close at the period specified in it — three months. Instead, however, of Pringle acting in the friendly way he had professed, he joined Cleghorn, and, without giving any explanation, they concluded a bargain with Constable & Co., by which I understand they take charge of their [Constable's] 'Scots Magazine' as soon as mine stops.

It is not of the least consequence to me losing them, as they were quite unfit for what they undertook. But it is most vexatious stopping the Magazine, which was doing so well. By our agreement neither party can continue it under the same title. I have, however, made an arrangement with a gentleman of first-rate talents by which I will begin a new work of a far superior kind. I mention this to you, however, in the strictest confidence, as I am not at liberty yet to say anything more particularly about it. It will be announced in good time, and I have no fears as to its making us ample amends for our present disappointment. I shall take good care to have the two numbers we are yet to publish equal, if not superior, to the preceding ones, and you will continue your exertions the same as ever. My editors have very dishonestly made it known to a number of people that we stop at the 6th number. This will interfere a little with our sale here, but I hope not with you.

This rapid decision was not accepted, it is scarcely necessary to say, without a struggle, and a long correspondence arose on the matter, wordy and on both sides a little tedious to the distant spectator, but full

of that wonderful flow and eloquence which personal controversy gives. The editors could have nothing to say against Mr Blackwood's resolution, for it had been fully provided for in the original agreement; but they kept up a lengthened wrangle over the edition to be published of the last remaining numbers, arguing that there should be only a sufficient number printed to supply the subscribers, and suggesting that the publisher might, if left unfettered, print 20,000 as easily as 2000, and so swamp their possible profits altogether. Of these profits, as is unfortunately so often the case with writers, they had apparently formed a quite unfounded idea. The Magazine had never reached the paying point. But this was a thought which did not easily penetrate the intelligence of a time in which the one periodical of which everybody thought as a model paid largely, and the profits of literature were supposed by the ignorant—demoralised by the reports of fabulous sums paid to Scott and Byron, and even Moore—to be immense. John Murray's pocket-book with the thousand-pound note in it cast a glamour over the productions of the humblest author, and why Messrs Cleghorn and Pringle should not be as worthy of recompense as Francis Jeffrey and Henry Brougham was a fact hid from these gentlemen's eyes. I quote the following letter chiefly as showing the first visible introduction into Mr Blackwood's arrangements of a figure destined hereafter to take so much place in them :—

W. Blackwood to Messrs Pringle and Cleghorn.

As you have now an interest directly opposite to mine, I hope you will not think it unreasonable that I should be made acquainted with the materials which you intend for this

number. It occurs to me that it would save all unpleasant discussion if you were inclined to send the different articles to Mr John Wilson, who has all along taken so deep an interest in the Magazine. I do not wish to offer my opinion with regard to the fitness or unfitness of any article, but I should expect that you would be inclined to listen to anything which Mr Wilson might suggest. He had promised me the following articles: "Account of Marlowe's Edward II.," "Argument in the Case of the Dumb Woman lately before the Court," "Vindication of Wordsworth," "Reviews of Lament of Tasso," "Poetical Epistles, and Spencer's Tour." His furnishing these or even other articles will, however, depend upon the articles you have got and intend to insert.

I beg to assure you that it is my most anxious wish to have the whole business settled speedily and as amicably as possible.

The last number thus referred to had evidently been delayed beyond the proper time of publication, which was a way they had in those days. No exertions on Murray's part, for instance, could secure the appearance of the 'Quarterly' at its correct, or indeed at any regular time, and to postpone the publication of a Magazine from day to day, or even from week to week, seems to have been a pleasant vagary of an age in which literary persons, or, to use the more flattering conventional term, persons of genius, were still considered quite above the laws of punctuality and regularity. Messrs Cleghorn and Pringle kept the threat of an indefinite delay in respect to this last number over the publisher's head to force him into compliance with their demands; but in this particular they reckoned without their Blackwood —also, it must be added, without the sensible and candid arbitrator who finally arranged the matter. I may quote here a portion of the long letter recapitu-

lating all the arguments, which Mr Blackwood wrote to Mr Combe, the agent of the editors, apparently under the immediate sting of a paper printed by them, and containing a very unfair account of the proceedings from the beginning. It is dated 29th October 1817 :—

W. Blackwood to Mr Combe.

You have seen from the correspondence that it was my most anxious wish to settle with your clients as speedily as the accounts could be made out; that I furnished the accounts within a very few days after the sixth number was published, and in my letter enclosing them, offered to send my clerk to settle the whole at any time they chose; that in place of their agreeing to this, your clients still wanted a reference, when there was in fact nothing to refer; that after plaguing both themselves and me by insisting I should not name any other than a bookseller as my referee, they at last empowered you to send me a scroll on Tuesday last of the submission,[1] by which we were to refer all matters in dispute to the gentlemen whom I had originally proposed—on my part Mr More, and on their part Mr Brownlee. Yesterday I called upon you, and stated what I had proposed all along,—that if your clients would allow my clerk to call upon them, or if they would empower you to act for them, I was quite certain that the whole might be settled in a quarter of an hour. You received my proposal in the most candid manner, and after conversing over the matter a little, you agreed with me in thinking this by far the best mode for both parties. Accordingly you called upon me in the course of the forenoon with a proposal from your clients that I should pay them £300 for their half share of the property and any claims they might afterwards have upon the Magazine. I told you at once that this was entirely out of the question, and I showed you clearly by the statements of sales and expenses that I was at present nearly £140 out of pocket, so that there

[1] A Scotch law-term, meaning the legal statement of details in a case.

was not a farthing to divide, and that even if the whole of the impression were sold off there would not be £70 of clear profit, consequently that their half share at some distant period, if ever, would only be £30 or £35. You were so much convinced of the justice of what I stated, that you said you would go to them again and endeavour to show them the propriety of making some more reasonable proposal. When you returned you showed me a statement of profits, claims, &c., on the basis of which they considered themselves warranted in asking from me £150 in full of all demands. I felt myself so completely tired of all disputing with your clients, that I had resolved in my own mind that I would rather sacrifice a hundred pounds to be rid of them. I therefore told you that though I felt confident no arbiter would award them anything in the present state of the concern, yet to get matters settled in an amicable way I would agree to pay them £100. After some further conference we concluded the matter by dividing the difference, which, if your clients agreed to, the matter was settled. You called on me at the Royal Exchange between four and five, and pressed me much instantly to write the letter of agreement. I could not then conjecture any reason for such urgent haste, and I told you that it was quite impossible for me to do it at that moment, but that I would be glad to see you at my shop at 8 o'clock, when we could exchange missives in a regular way. You called accordingly, and we exchanged the missives, with mutual assurances of satisfaction at this amicable close of all matters of dispute.

The haste of the conclusion was, it afterwards appeared, in order that the bargain should be finally made before the publication of the "Printed Paper," in which these ungenerous opponents went over the whole question again, charging the publisher with a series of petty dishonesties, with eluding their claims for payment, and with keeping them in ignorance of the state of affairs—all of which are, we fear, the stock accusations of unfortunate writers who quarrel with

their publishers. It was natural that this very shabby artifice should have much exasperated a man who felt himself the loser, not only by more than two hundred pounds of honest money, but by all the defeated expectations of the previous six months, which linked his name with failure, a thing intolerable to his ardent mind.

The eventual fate of these two incompetent editors had little to do with literature. Constable's small magazine, which they managed for a short time, soon went the way of all dull periodicals; and after the tremendous commotion caused in Edinburgh by the Chaldee Manuscript, the names of Pringle and Cleghorn dropped apart. Pringle emigrated to the Cape in later years, having first published a volume of amiable and patriotic poetry, which I remember to have admired in those facile days of youth when, everything that rhymed was agreeable to the ear and to the soul. It is pleasant to add that when, many years after, we find again the handwriting of Thomas Pringle in Mr Blackwood's endless correspondence, there is no trace in it of any unkindly feeling. Much the contrary: he writes to claim the support of his old friend for some scheme of a new church for Capetown, where he had established himself, and to send the MS. of a friend, which he commends to the attention of Blackwood and "crusty Christopher," with the friendly confidence, which he expresses, that it will be all the better received (as he flatters himself) because it comes to them from his hands. This is very little like the utterance of a wounded spirit. Of Cleghorn we have no such pleasant note. Mrs Gordon, in her life of Christopher

North, describes him as having done better in business than in literature; but there is no further information about him in connection with this episode in his life. They both come into the famous Chaldee manuscript with certain personal details which perhaps might have been better spared; though the curious fact of the lameness of both is so quaintly and not untenderly described as "skipping on staves," that it sounds more affectionate and humorously laughable than unkind.

We feel, with the disappearance of these men and all the paraphernalia of their feebleness from the scene, as if everybody concerned must have drawn deep breaths of satisfaction and freedom. The little Magazine under their charge was the most curious jumble of the high-flown and the commonplace—much serious and even fine criticism, as in the papers on the Greek Drama (believed to be by Lockhart), mingled with discussion of the early wonders of Animal Magnetism, and treatises partly archæological upon the symbolical position of the Salt on ancient tables; while these again were supplemented by chronicles of border fairs and markets, records of village wonders, like the case of the country girl who slept for six weeks, and even the minutiæ of the Register, births, deaths, and marriages. Nothing could be more clear than that it was not in this way that the ambitious hopes with which the new venture had been undertaken could be satisfied.

After this curious and clumsy preface, the real 'Blackwood's Magazine' at last began. It may be amusing to quote before going further the very characteristic letter from James Ballantyne with which that

worthy gave in his estimate for the printing. We begin to understand the half-romantic, half-absurd, and entirely humorous faithfulness of Scott to his old comrades and vassals when we turn over these letters of the always plausible and bland printer. He is so sure of his own perfect integrity when he is most conscious of being in the wrong, so amiably skilful in putting the best face upon things, and making the worse appear the better cause, that it is impossible to bear him any malice; and we quite understand how, offended and disappointed as Blackwood must have been by the sudden transference of his prize out of his hands in the very moment of triumph, he should yet have been found not very long after anxious to give Ballantyne employment, and consenting to guarantee, with some others, the doubtful solvency of the man who had been the instrument of his disappointment, with a ready kindness which says much for his goodness of heart and something also for the personal attraction of the erratic printer. Ballantyne's large and specious argument to prove the moderation of his own charges will amuse the reader. He is evidently aware that objections might be made on this point, or he would not have thrown out those flying buttresses to strengthen his position. His letter is dated 7th January 1817, and clearly concerns the first beginning of the 'Edinburgh Monthly Magazine':—

James Ballantyne to W. Blackwood.

A certain scale of printer's profits has been acted upon in Edinburgh from time immemorial, and the surest possible proof that that scale is not too high is furnished by the fact that printers in general are not rich men. Many, the great majority

of them, are rather poor than otherways; and I do not recollect one who has become opulent by book-printing and jobs only. I infer, therefore, that the scale is an honest and fair one, and that those who do all they can do to lower it by working at inferior prices commit an act of manifest injustice to their brethren. With such opinions, it would be preposterously inconsistent in me to sanction by my own practice what I so strongly disapprove in others.

There is another reason, however, for making a deduction from the regular estimate; and this I am quite ready to admit within decent limits. A work like a Magazine, which may be calculated upon to last for years, ought, I think, to be able to afford a discount; and this I am willing to do, as I believe no honest man in the trade would fairly be entitled to censure me for doing so. But I find the deduction which you propose to me to make, altogether beyond moderate limits. I have put upon the next page what I conceive to be an honest price, making a proper allowance for the benefit resulting from the probable endurance of the work. I do assure you that I cannot charge the prices one sixpence lower. My sense of obligation to you for desiring to give me a preference upon equal terms will not be lessened, however you may decide.

The quaintness of the argument that his prices must be considered to be moderate because few printers become rich, is delightful. We have heard it used in a contrary sense in respect to the great author and publisher question. The publisher often grows rich, the author very seldom does, therefore—the conclusion is the simplest and easiest in the world. But not even this admirable argument, though enforced by the natural liking for the man who stated his case with an astuteness so simple and so transparent, was sufficient to change the practical necessities of a bargain. As it turned out, it was Oliver & Boyd, and not Ballantyne, who were the first printers of the

Magazine, though the work returned into Ballantyne's hands in after-years.

The decks were now cleared, the men were at their posts: the real battle was about to begin. One can imagine the bustle and the commotion in the rooms in Princes Street, the endless consultations, the wild suggestions: Lockhart, pensive and serious, almost melancholy, in the fiery fever of satire and ridicule that possessed him, launching his javelin with a certain pleasure in the mischief as well as the most perfect self-abandonment to the impulse of the moment; Wilson, with Homeric roars of laughter, and a recklessness still less under control, not caring whom he attacked nor with what bitterness, apparently unconscious of the sting till it was inflicted, when he collapsed into ineffectual penitence; Hogg bustling in, all flushed and heated with a new idea, in which the rustic daffing of the countryside gave a rougher force to the keen shafts of the gentlemen. That it must be a strong number, something to startle the world, a sort of fiery meteor to blaze across the Edinburgh sky and call every man's attention, was the first necessity. They were determined upon this, whatever else might follow: no longer any calm of respectable mediocrity—something to sting and startle, and make every reader hold his breath. The position of the publisher between those uncontrollable, high-spirited, mirth-loving young men, who had taken possession of him and his premises and his Magazine, whose talents roused him into that enthusiasm of which we have already seen him to be so capable, and whose gay determination to make a stir in the world was only as the foam upon the river to his own

indomitable resolution, right or wrong, to win or lose all, whatever it might cost him—is a most curious and interesting one. William Blackwood was too sagacious and too completely a man of his world not to know exactly what effect the Chaldee Manuscript would produce. If the fun went to his head, as to the heads of the others who produced it, it never did so sufficiently to make him unaware of the risk he was running—that risk which was his alone, which would not touch those dashing daring young men any more than any other excellent joke would do. We cannot doubt for a moment that he knew what he was about. He was not a man to be carried off his feet at such a critical moment—or rather he permitted himself to be carried off his feet, casting prudence to the winds, by the inspiration of that other kind of prudence which sometimes sees it the wisest thing to set everything on the turn of a balance, and

> "put it to the touch,
> To gain or lose it all."

There is nothing that has been more commented on and wondered at than the immense effect produced by a piece of remote local satire, which could only be comprehended by those who knew the people, the scene, and to some degree even the circumstances of the extraordinary *jeu d'esprit* with which the new series began. But it is clear, for one thing, that the opinion of London and the world—almost convertible phrases nowadays, and the chief, almost the only, aim of literature and literary ambition—did not occur at all to these young men. It was for Edinburgh they wrote, and of Edinburgh they thought, which is a

most singular thing to think of among all the changes which time has brought about. No doubt Edinburgh is quite enough to make a reputation still; but there is perhaps no one nowadays, certainly no number of men, who would venture to leave the rest of the world out of their calculation, nay, to pique and almost defy the rest of the world by a production most laughable, most able, tantalising as if written in a language but half understood, which was patent to Edinburgh alone. No such thing could be done now: we hope, but are not sure, that the personalities which gave it its zest are no longer a temptation even to the youngest and most daredevil of the literary sept; but if this were not so, if it were still the fashion to transfix your foe where you found him, and search out with delight every crevice in his armour, there is no literary skirmisher but would pause to think, with a cold chill upon his ardour, how many readers would care or understand what he meant. But the wits of 1817 had no such chill. They knew very well that Edinburgh would understand what they meant, and they were disposed to chance the understanding of the rest of the world—indeed they did not apparently take the rest of the world into consideration at all.

It seems scarcely necessary to explain what the Chaldee Manuscript was, for never perhaps was there a satirical composition, certainly never one which concerned so small a circle, and was so purely local in its aim, which has had so much fame in the world, and become so universally known. Yet we have to remember that new generations who know not Joseph are arising every day, and that what everybody knows begins after the lapse of very nearly a century to be-

come a very vague and general knowledge. When we say that it concerned chiefly the quarrel between Mr Blackwood and the two editors who had wrecked his little Magazine and disappointed his hopes, and the larger strife and rivalry which existed between Constable and himself, one Edinburgh bookseller against another, along with the background of people, notable, yet only in one case world-distinguished, who took part on either side, the young reader may well be astonished that so much has been written of this production. Yet it is not too much to say that in its way it moved the world, and that readers who had never heard of half the characters in it, and to whom the personal peculiarities of the various men in Edinburgh who appeared in its scenes were altogether unknown, laughed and stormed, and disapproved, and grew solemn in reproof and denunciation, and laughed again—till the original little brown-covered brochure of the new periodical was torn in pieces by eager buyers and clamorous critics, and 'Blackwood's Magazine' leaped all at once into the knowledge, the curiosity, and the attention of the book-loving world. It was, perhaps, not the firmest of foundations, but it was a most effectual one. Edinburgh rose to it like one man, delighted, amused, offended, furious. Whatever after-criticism might be expended upon it—and that came pouring in on every side—this one thing was assured from the first day: that it had done what it was meant to do, and that whatever was to be said of the new 'Blackwood's Magazine,' which had risen with such a shout out of the ashes of the old, this at least could be said no longer, that it was dull or inoffensive—which is of all criticism the most dreadful.

The suggestion, it is said, and a part, but no one knows how much, of the composition, came from Hogg, who, whatever other failures there might be in his education otherwise, was no doubt steeped, like almost every other shepherd on the Scotch hills, in Biblical language, and also a little touched with that profane familiarity with sacred phraseology which is the reverse of the medal, and has given the opponents of the Bible in schools their strongest argument. Amid all the talk and consideration how to give a point not to be overlooked to the new issue, he rushed in among the young and dauntless band, eager to combine their immediate business with the greatest possible amount of fun and amusement to themselves, with his idea, and such scraps of it as he had already expressed in words. The suggestion filled them with delight. There is a legend that they were all three invited that night with others of their allies to dinner at a certain hospitable house, 53 Queen Street, where after dinner, and when they had got rid of the ladies, this delightful joke was propounded, and the whole company set to work it out, one after another adding a verse. They were a mixed party, not idle young advocates alone, but philosophers, lawyers, and men of business, all keen for the jest. Sir William Hamilton was the contributor of one verse, as the story goes, and was so overcome with delight and amusement at his own cleverness that he rolled off his chair in fits of laughter. The sound of the fun as it waxed fast and furious, coming in gusts from the dining-room, tantalised and bewildered the ladies above, who could not imagine what was going on; but we are not told that they were

taken into the confidence of the rioters. This is a legend which is not perhaps much more to be relied on than if it were a legend of the saints. We have the fact on Lockhart's authority that he and Wilson sitting up half the night, with Mr Blackwood filling the part of the admiring audience, and cheering them on as verse was added to verse—were the real authors. And this story no doubt is the true one.

It is only fair that the reader should judge for himself of this production. He has just heard the story of Pringle and Cleghorn, and their failure. He will therefore be as able as any one to comprehend the amusing version which I quote from an old yellow proof, with the dust of nearly seventy years upon its crumpled page. It was not yet revised, and it is different a little from the final publication. He will, however, be very well able to decide whether there was any venom in the tale. It is prefaced by a grave paragraph, giving the exact place of the manuscript in "the great Library of Paris." The writer is set down suddenly "in the midst of a great city that looketh toward the north and toward the east, and ruleth over every nation and kindred and tongue that handle the pen of the writer."

I looked, and behold a man clothed in plain apparel stood in the door of his house: and I saw his name, and the number of his name; and his name was as it had been the colour of ebony, and his number was as the number of a maiden, when the days of the years of her virginity have expired.

And I turned my eyes, and behold two beasts came from the lands of the borders of the South; and when I saw them I wondered with great admiration.

The one beast was like a lamb, and the other like a bear; and they had wings on their heads: their faces also were like

the faces of men, the joints of their legs like the polished cedars of Lebanon, and their feet like the feet of horses preparing to go to battle: and they arose and they came onward over the face of the earth, and they touched not the ground as they went.

And they came unto the man who was clothed in plain apparel, and stood in the door of his house.

And they said unto him, Give us of thy wealth, that we may eat and live, and thou shalt enjoy the fruits of our labours for a time, times, or half a time.

And he answered and said unto them, What will you do for me whereunto I may employ you?

And the one said, I will teach the people of that land to till and to sow; to reap the harvest and gather the sheaves into the barn; to feed their flocks and enrich themselves with the wool.

And the other said, I will teach the children of thy people to know and discern between right and wrong, good and evil, and in all things that relate to learning and knowledge and understanding.

And they proffered him a Book; and they said unto him, Take thou this and give us a sum of money, that we may eat and drink and our souls may live.

And we will put words into the Book that will astonish the children of thy people; and it shall be a light unto thy feet and a lamp unto thy path; it shall also bring bread unto thy household and a portion to thy maidens.

And the man hearkened unto their voice, and he took the Book and gave them a piece of money, and they went away rejoicing in their hearts; and I heard a great noise as if it had been the noise of many chariots and of horsemen upon their horses.

But after many days they put no words in the Book; and the man was astonished and waxed wroth, and he said unto them, What is this that ye have done unto me, and how shall I answer those to whom I am engaged? And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that.

Unless it might happen to be the mere title of the "beasts," which was shared by Blackwood's future

supporters as well as those who deceived him, we are unable to see the least bitterness in this. It is excellent fooling, and occasionally the turns of phrase, though exceedingly profane, are extremely funny; but there is no bitterness in it, nor cause of complaint, that we can see. The only "personality" lies in the curious fact that both Pringle and Cleghorn were so lame as to use crutches when they walked: whence "the great noise as if it had been the noise of many chariots" which attended their coming and going.

The picture of the rival power, Constable, long before this time known as "the Crafty" among these wild young Tories, forms an admirable pendant to that of the two beasts:—

And in those days and at that time there lived also a man that was *crafty* in counsel and cunning in all manner of working; and the man was an upright and a just man, one who feared God and eschewed evil; and he never was accused before any judge of fraud, or of perjury, or of deceit: for the man was honourable among the sons of men.

And I beheld the man, and he was comely and well-favoured, and he had a notable horn in his forehead with which he ruled the nations.

And I saw the horn that it had eyes, and a mouth speaking great things, and it magnified itself even to the Prince of the host, and it cast down the truth to the ground, and it practised and prospered.

And when this man saw the Book, and beheld the things that were in the Book, he was troubled in spirit and much cast down.

And he said unto himself, "Why stand I idle here, and why do I not bestir myself?—lo! this Book shall become a devouring sword in the hand of mine adversary, and with it will he root up or loosen the horn that is in my forehead, and the hope of my gains shall perish from the face of the earth."

Even Scott himself was not spared; and the manner in which he took the joke was like himself. Lockhart tells us, on the authority of Sir David Wilkie, who was present, that Scott, when he read it, "was almost choked with laughter; and he afterwards confessed that the Chaldean author had given a sufficiently accurate account of what really passed on the occasion."

But when the spirits were gone he [the Crafty] said unto himself, I will arise and go unto a Magician which is of my friends: of a surety he will devise some remedy, and free me out of my distresses.

So he arose and came unto that great Magician which hath his dwelling in the old fastness hard by the river Jordan, which is by the Border.

And the Magician opened his mouth, and said, Lo! my heart wisheth thy good, and let the thing prosper which is in thy hands to do it:

But thou seest that my hands are full of working, and my labour is great. For, lo, I have to feed all the people of my land, and none knoweth whence his food cometh; but each man openeth his mouth, and my hand fills it with pleasant things.

Moreover, thine adversary also is of my familiars.

The land is before thee: draw up thine hosts for the battle on the mount of Proclamation, and defy boldly thine enemy, which hath his camp in the place of Princes; quit ye as men, and let favour be shown unto him which is most valiant.

Yet be thou silent: peradventure will I help thee some little.

An address exactly the same is made by the Magician to the other applicant for his favour; which is as a matter of fact what did occur. But in all this mockery there was no sting. Scott received it "almost choked with laughter." The young rogues had

divined him, and knew that he had no mind to commit himself to the Crafty, any more than to pledge himself to his lively neighbours. It was thus in pure fun that the joke was carried on. In the description of the second set of beasts who came forth for the service of the man clothed in plain apparel, the writers did not spare themselves.

> The first that came was the beautiful leopard from the valley of the palm-trees, whose going forth was comely as the greyhound, and his eyes like the lightning of fiery flame.
>
> And he called from a far country the scorpion, which delighteth to sting the faces of men, that he might sting sorely the countenance of the man that is crafty, and of the two beasts.
>
> And he brought down the great wild boar from the forest of Lebanon, and he roused up his spirits, and I saw him whetting his dreadful tusks for the battle.

Perhaps of all these mocking designations the two which were affixed by the hands of the brethren to themselves have stuck most firmly—especially that of the scorpion, which is not flattering. No doubt his comrades must have recognised the appropriateness of the signalment, and seen in it the most apt resemblance to the swift and sudden dart which was launched in a moment, without change of the pensive countenance, by the deftest hand among them. In all this we do not believe that the reader of to-day will see either malice or bitterness. Without doubt there were sharper stings by the way at chance personages who had not much to do with the main question—such as the injured baronet, Sir J. G. Dalyell (not a baronet, however, at that moment), to whose piteous

complaint, as we shall afterwards see, the Lords of Session were called upon to listen, and whose recapitulation, in the terms of the law, of the missile aimed at him is even more grotesquely comic than the libel itself.

This assault upon all and sundry gave the delighted conspirators an amount of pleasure in the concocting which ought to have fully indemnified them for any trouble afterwards. They awaited with impatience the clearing out of their predecessors, and the coming of that jovial October that should launch them upon the world which they meant to take by storm. In something of the same mind they compiled a list as long as a man's arm of articles on every subject under the sun, which were preparing, as they promised, and which it would have taxed an army of trained men of letters to produce. But they were confident in their power to do anything, and perhaps the dashing bravado, after all, was more genuine than appeared. "Wilson," says Mr R. P. Gillies—himself a contributor—in his 'Recollections of a Literary Veteran,' "instead of desiring good Mr Pringle's stores of reserved copy, very decisively maintained that any man in a state of tolerable health, and disposed for literary amusement, might write an entire number in the course of two days! He had then a rapidity of executive power in composition such as I have never seen equalled before nor since. But as he would do nothing but when he liked and how he liked, his productions, whether serious or comic, might all be regarded as mere *jeux d'esprit* and matters of amusement. Mr Lockhart, I suppose, was more systematic in his pur-

suits, though his rapidity of pen was almost marvellous. I remember he considered thirty-two columns, a whole printed sheet, as an ordinary day's work, which might be accomplished without the slightest fatigue or stress." This rapidity accounts for much of the tumult and rush of their proceedings. They were carried away by the flow of easy and delightful power. There was no talk in these days of overwork, no fear of shattered nerves or brain exhaustion. It was fortunately the fashion to be robust in mind as well as in body. They needed no artificial hush about them. Perhaps it may be allowed they would have done better for themselves and their after fame if they had been a little more bound by these restraints. As for their audience, it was the sweep and fulness, the very torrent of young strength, impetuosity, and daring, which moved it to a kind of rapture.

The position of the sober man of business, who was like themselves in swiftness of mind and readiness of spirit, and whose keen eye saw the advantage to be reaped from the very disadvantages, the reckless imprudence and dash, which are instruments in a cool and steady hand as good as any—is at this moment very curious. He withheld and subdued, when it was necessary, with great unconscious skill, with the constant steadiness and sense which always have their influence—and which were strengthened even by his faculty of being carried away and moved to enthusiasm by the flow of wit and genius, the only things that ever went to his head. He would have been more than mortal if he had not been delighted with the

demolishing of the Crafty, that equally strong and more cunning opponent who had managed to seize from him in a moment the prize which he had almost made his own. But that he had dark moments, and that he could not always moderate those fiery spirits as much as he wished, there could be little doubt.

No thought of this, however, was in his mind when the October number had been seen through the press, with endless laughter and the highest anticipations of triumph. The chorus of young performers disappear into their homes, into their other frolics—perhaps to some solemn Edinburgh dinner-party where an irrestrainable laugh, a word or look thrown at each other behind backs, would be all by which they would dare to express their excitement over this new adventure and mystery, or the sensation, the explosion which they awaited on the morrow—till they could escape to the joyous relief of some favourite tavern, for clubs were not as yet, to let out the laughter and the agitation. In the meantime the man in plain apparel for a moment had the scene all to himself. He received the new number, fresh and fragrant from the press—it is but an old and shabby number now, the brown covers faded, the columns less smooth and regular than in later days—with his heart beating in his ears. Did it mean fortune and success? or did it mean something very different? But he did not allow himself to dwell upon that darker chance. Before he left Princes Street he copied with his own hand into a new quarto volume the letter he had just sent to the captain of his forces, he "whose going forth was comely as the greyhound, and his eyes like the

lightning of fiery flame." The name is put in in a corner ruled off with careful lines, in the very formality of which the nervous excitement shows; thus—

John Wilson, Esq.,
Queen Street.

October 20, 1817.

My dear Sir,—As in duty bound I send you the first complete copy I have got of the 'Magazine.' I also beg you will do me the favour to accept of the enclosed. It is unnecessary for me to say how much and how deeply I am indebted to you, and I shall only add that by the success of the 'Magazine' (for which I shall be wholly indebted to you) I hope to be able to offer you something more worthy of your acceptance.—I am, dear Sir, yours very truly, W. Blackwood.

There is a thrill of emotion and feeling in this formal little epistle which shows in every exact and carefully written line. And then he walked home in the keen evening air — with perhaps that touch of coming frost in it which is considered seasonable, and which was exhilarating as generous wine to the vigorous and healthful man at the height of his manhood and strength—with the precious little packet under his arm. He went into his house, where all the children—by this time a nursery full—rushed out with clamour and glee to meet their father, who for once, in his excitement, took no notice of them, but walked straight to the drawing-room, where his wife, not excitable, sat in her household place, busy no doubt for her fine family; and, coming in to the warm glow of the light, threw down the precious Magazine at her feet. "There is that that will give you what is your due—what I always wished you to have," he said, with the half-sobbing laugh of the great crisis.

She gave him a characteristic word, half-satirical, as was her way, not outwardly moved, with a shake of her head and a doubt. He was always sanguine; but she had no bees in her bonnet. Sometimes he called her a wet blanket when she thus damped his ardour, —but not, I think, that night.

And next day all Edinburgh was ringing with the wild, witty, flagrant attack upon all the notabilities. And the authors were the only men who did not venture to laugh too much over this joke which convulsed their world.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN.

ACTIONS FOR LIBEL—THE COCKNEY SCHOOL OF POETRY—LEIGH HUNT AND HAZLITT ATTACKED — CHARACTERISTIC LETTERS FROM WILSON AND LOCKHART — BLACKWOOD STANDS FIRM — HE SECURES THE COUNTENANCE AND CO-OPERATION OF SCOTT—LETTERS FROM SCOTT—WILLIAM LAIDLAW — SCOTT'S OPINION OF THE CHALDEE MANUSCRIPT — JOHN MURRAY'S NOTION OF WHAT A MAGAZINE SHOULD BE—LOCKHART AND WILSON'S JOINT-REPLY TO MURRAY—THEY CHALLENGE AN ANONYMOUS ASSAILANT—BLACKWOOD REFUSES TO SELL 'DON JUAN.'

THE effect of the new number was instantaneous and extraordinary. There is next to nobody living now who remembers personally the commotion and tumult in Edinburgh over the Chaldee Manuscript, but many still remember to have heard of it from their elders, with such remains of the old excitement, amusement, triumph, or wrath, which, fifty years later, it needed only a word to recall, and which were almost inconceivable in their warmth after so long an interval. My mother was a fervent Liberal, and therefore completely opposed to 'Blackwood's Magazine'; also a woman much out of the world, living in the country, and but slenderly acquainted, I imagine, with the subjects of the satire; yet her laugh over it, and her remembrance of it, made it familiar to me long before

I saw a word of it in print. It was one of the old brilliant things "such as you never hear of nowadays" of her youth; and I am afraid the trials for libel, the tremendous wounds thus lightly inflicted, the outcries and complaints, were to the temper of her generation only a charm the more. Edinburgh woke up next morning with a roar of laughter, with a shout of delight, with convulsions of rage and offence. There seems to have been nothing particularly noted in the Magazine—though the number was full of good and bad things—but this. It ran through every group of men and into every company like wildfire. The dinner-parties on that evening would no doubt be most successful parties—no want of subjects for conversation, whether it was in fury, whether in fun, sometimes the two combined.

Blackwood's first number was immediately bought up [says Mr R. P. Gillies in his 'Recollections of a Literary Veteran], and a new edition issued, from which, however, the firebrand Chaldee was prudently excluded. But by this concession to the prevalent taste our amiable public was put to the test. Every purchaser expected to have his copy of the far-famed satire, and every one growled at its absence. Copies of the original number were handed about, with manuscript notes identifying the principal characters, and high prices were offered for a copy which the fortunate possessor had read and could dispense with. It was truly a most laughable *jeu d'esprit*, while the portraits were nevertheless so grotesque and shadowy, and the whole so evidently intended for a harmless joke, that the worthies indicated, had they been wise, might either have joined in the laugh or treated the matter with silent contempt. But, on the contrary, all without exception took offence, and some commenced actions in the Court of Session, and got judgments in their favour for injuries done to their reputation.

One of the first of these ill-advised persons was a

certain advocate, John Graham Dalyell, Esq. (afterwards Sir John), who on the 10th of November 1817, not a fortnight after the publication of the Magazine, summoned the publisher on the following plea :—

That the false, malevolent, or wanton mockery of personal infirmities, and holding them up as a subject for public scorn and derision, is arraigning the wise dispensations of Providence, bringing the afflicted into contempt, and a cruel outrage of his feelings. That falsely and malevolently devising, uttering, or publishing contumelious descriptions, reproachful words, calumnious charges, and insinuations tending to disturb the peace of any individual, to depreciate his character in public or private esteem, or to impair the means of his subsistence and comfort, are all or either of them grievous injuries, which found him in an action for damages and reparation against the aggressor. That the said John Graham Dalyell is a member of the Faculty of Advocates practising before the Supreme Courts of Scotland, and is also the author of literary compositions, written either on his own account or at the desire of the proprietors and editors of literary works from whom he receives remuneration. That in these employments his means of subsistence consist. That while the said John Graham Dalyell was reposing in the bosom of his family, following his lawful avocations and literary pursuits, and at peace and amity with all mankind, WILLIAM BLACKWOOD, bookseller in Princes Street, Edinburgh (the publisher of a literary work, book, or pamphlet bearing the title of 'Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine' and purporting to be printed by Oliver & Boyd for the said William Blackwood), actuated by deliberate malignity and without any provocation whatever on the part of the said John Graham Dalyell, did insert and publish a wicked, false, and scandalous libel, grossly calumniating the person of the said John Graham Dalyell, in an indecent, irreverent, and blasphemous application of Scriptural language, which libel is contained in a number or volume of the said work.

The words which inflicted this injury were certainly unpleasing enough. They follow closely in the Chal-

dee Manuscript the comparatively harmless description of the two beasts. "The man who was crafty" found that another beast had joined the first two in his momentary absence :—

> Now the other beast was a beast that he loved not: a beast of burden which he had in his courts to hew wood and to draw water and to do all manner of unclean things. His face was like unto the face of an ape, and he chattered continually, and his nether parts were uncomely. Nevertheless his thighs were hairy, and the hair was as the shining of a satin raiment, and he skipped with the branch of a tree in his hand, and he chewed a snail between his teeth. . . . If thou lookest upon him and observest his ways, behold he was born of his mother before the months were fulfilled, and the substance of a living thing is not in him, and his horns are like the potsherd which is broken against any tree.

We may allow that this is not the kind of thing which it would be tolerable to have said of one, and admire the courage of the man who applied it to himself. It is to be presumed that the contemptuous description was so true to the life that no one could mistake it. We may allow even that it was, as he said, "a cruel, malicious, and wanton injury," and that "holding up in a style of mockery and derision the personal infirmities under which the said pursuer labours, impiously scoffing at what is the visitation of Heaven alone, and no fault of him the sufferer," was as cruel and unseemly in point of morals as it was bad taste and impossible in literature. Whether the poor man's feelings could be salved and his honour vindicated by the award of damages was of course for him to judge.

The Chaldee Manuscript, however, we are sorry to say, was the least of the sins of which the new number

was guilty. It began with a virulent and uncalled-for attack upon Coleridge and his 'Biographia Literaria,' which was of tenfold deeper guilt than the Chaldean vision, holding up the poet, both in his works and his person, to contempt. I am not aware that Coleridge retaliated directly at all, though he was not himself sparing in abuse while treating others, in the similar channel of a review; but his treatment of Blackwood was magnanimous, as will be apparent hereafter. Another shorter, still more virulent, and most unpardonable assault upon what the writer dubbed "The Cockney School of Poetry," signed with the initial Z, was the most offensive of all; and we are obliged to allow that it was an attack for which there is no word to be said, and which can only arouse our astonishment and dismay that the hand of a gentleman could have produced it, not to speak of a critic. Beside these two productions, the Chaldee Manuscript was innocence and good manners combined — though, strangely enough, the other papers do not seem to have offended the public, which was still raging over the Lake School and the Byron controversy, and hotly taking sides for and against these different literary parties, with a fervour and venom of vituperation happily unknown to this day.

The other sufferers, however, were not silent. Leigh Hunt—who on his part was as evil-tongued a critic as could be found, so that there is little cause for pity, except that such a man as Lockhart should ever have been tempted to indulge in abuse so unworthy of himself—was the special subject of attack in the "Cockney School," and lost no time in making his complaint. The summons of Mr Dalyell was ringing in the pub-

lisher's ears when his attention was called to the still more serious threat from London of an action on the part of Hunt. Lockhart himself did not hesitate to allow that the attack was actionable, and it evidently assumed a much more grave aspect than the other, with many anxious questions whether the case would be tried in London or in Edinburgh,—a libel in the former place being tried before a jury, and therefore with a result more likely to be detrimental. The first news of this came in an alarmed and troubled letter from the respectable firm of Messrs Baldwin, Cradock, & Co., in London, honest booksellers, with no more to do with the compounding of the literary wares they dealt in than a grocer has to do with the growing of his tea. One cannot but sympathise with the feelings of these good people when there arrived by the peaceable post a red-hot cartel, not unlike a summons to deadly combat, demanding that they should instantly give up the name of a writer in 'Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,' signing himself Z, who had given vent "to the most false, malignant, and altogether infamous aspersion on the character of Mr Leigh Hunt, editor of the 'Examiner.'" These excellent booksellers had their name as Mr Blackwood's correspondents upon his Magazine, without the faintest idea that they were thus placing themselves on the nest of a cockatrice. The discomfort, confusion, and disapproval of their letter is almost amusing:—

Messrs Baldwin, Cradock, & Co. to W. Blackwood.

LONDON, *Nov.* 3, 1817.

We were much surprised and hurt this morning at receiving a visit from Mr John Hunt, complaining on behalf of his brother of an article in your new Magazine signed Z. Not having had

time since the arrival of the copies to read the number, we were entirely ignorant of the nature of the article of which he complained; but, on examining it, we certainly think that it contains expressions which ought not to have been used. Being a convicted libeller himself, Mr Leigh Hunt has little right to complain of such attacks; but, as it is utterly contrary to our principles and conduct to publish them, we cannot but seriously regret that our names should be affixed to the Magazine containing the one in question. It appears that Mr John Hunt's object in calling was to demand that we should endeavour to procure for him the name of the writer of the article. We told him that we thought it very unlikely that we should be successful in such an attempt; but that if he would state his demand in writing, we would send it to you. He immediately, in our house, wrote the annexed, which we hasten to transmit.

Whatever answer you may think proper to send in satisfaction to Mr Hunt, we expect that you will make it clear that we have no knowledge of the writer, and that we had none of the article itself till it was printed: for, whatever our opinion may be of Mr Hunt, we surely cannot sanction the publication of such an article under our name. On the present occasion we shall merely add, that our continuing the agency in London of your Magazine must entirely depend upon its being free from personalities on the moral character of any individual.

Mr Blackwood's reply was, we fear, not exactly in accordance with fact; but there are recognised fictions in such cases which a man is almost compelled to accept whether he wishes to do so or not. He hastens to clear the character of his respectable correspondents from every shadow of blame:—

W. Blackwood to Messrs Baldwin, Cradock, & Co.

It is quite unnecessary for me to say anything with regard to your utter ignorance of the article in question till after you had received the Magazine; and, as I never wrote you one syllable as to the contents of this number, you were equally ignorant both of the tendency of any of the articles or by whom they were written.

Mr Blackwood then, like an astute publisher, piously professes his own want of "control over the measures of my Editor," and completes the circle of virtuous irresponsibility by certain details of the accidental insertion of the article in question as sent from London by a writer of great ability, whose support the said Editor was afraid he had lost. "He was so glad to find that a person of such powerful talents was to support the Magazine, that he gave the communication a very hasty glance and sent it immediately to press." So that, really when you came to examine into all the details, nobody was to blame. Everything, however, he engages, is to be done that can be done to mend the matter. "My Editor," severe in moral authority, "has written to the author to say, that he cannot avail himself of his future communications unless they are free from this defect." He (the aforesaid Editor) had also offered

decidedly to express his sentiments on the subject in a note in the number which will be published on Nov. 20th, in which he will also insert an able letter in vindication of Mr Hunt, which he has received by this post from an eminent young barrister.

While he thus disclaims the slightest intention of countenancing any aspersions on the character of Mr Leigh Hunt as an individual, I may mention to you that his opinions with regard to the spirit of that gentleman's poetry coincides pretty nearly with that of Z. But Mr H. must be aware that the pages of my Magazine are open to anything that his friends or admirers may write in its defence.

The next person who intervenes in the correspondence is a judicious Mr John Richardson, himself a contributor to the erring Magazine, who, hearing

that nothing will satisfy the victim or induce him to refrain from a prosecution but a disclosure of the writer's name, calls upon the Hunts to see what he can do. This gentleman does not think that in any case there need be much feared in the way of damages. But he does not any more than the others justify the attack. Mr Richardson's discussion of the question is curious. He says that Mr Leigh Hunt can, he believes, without difficulty, "prove himself individually to be almost, if not altogether, as pure and correct a man as walks the streets of London," but that no doubt the power of a jury to discriminate between abuse of a school and tendency in poetry, and abuse of a man, is doubtful. "It seems to me," he says, "that the publication of anything mischievous by a man of good character is infinitely more dangerous than a similar publication by a man of bad character. . . . Thus, if the poem is impure, would a pure man choose an impure subject? Would his individual purity justify his sending impurity abroad?" These reasonings would be much out of place in our day, when this is exactly what happens, and not only men but women, themselves of perfectly good character and no naughty impulses, write all manner of immodest stories and suggestions, on principle. And it is truly astounding to discover that all this question of purity and impurity and Mr Leigh Hunt's morals, and his critic's abuse which shocked the world, was about that rhymed novel or novelette the 'Story of Rimini,' which very few people in our day have ever read, and which is merely a weak and lengthy paraphrase of the immortal dozen lines of Dante in which Francesca and Paolo were first re-

vealed to the world. To make it all the more wonderful, Murray was the publisher of the poem, in which Blackwood either had a share, or, as the agent of Murray, pushed and sold, much exhorted so to do by his friends in London.

Finally, we believe Mr Leigh Hunt's injured feelings were calmed down, and that, with various answering bursts of abuse in his paper, the 'Examiner,' the quarrel went on in an appropriate and legitimate way; but it made a breach between Blackwood and the firm of Baldwin & Cradock, whose pious horror at being concerned in such a row, and anxiety that the world should be made aware how very little they had to do with it, are edifying beyond expression. Their name disappears from the November (1817) number of the Magazine; but the articles on the Cockney School of poetry went on bravely, and the name stuck, if nothing else. Z's articles, however, in the succeeding numbers are in better, or at least in less bad taste, and consequently much more effective than that in the first, which, while exceedingly abusive, was not brilliant, though every supporter of the Magazine was ready to go to the stake for its talent at least, if nothing else. It is most curious to find the light rhymes and trivial strains of the 'Story of Rimini' solemnly treated, as if it might upset the morals of the world, with accusations which are not less than horrible attached to its insignificant details. But the eyesight of contemporaries is so curiously out of focus that it is impossible to overestimate its strange tendency to confuse all perspective. In one portion of these strictures, coming from so capable a critic, who

ought certainly to have known better, he threatens to attack in turn "the younger and less important members" of his so-called Cockney School, "the Shelleys, the Keatses, and the Webbes." That Leigh Hunt should be supposed by any one to be more important than Shelley and Keats seems inconceivable: or that these should be associated with the trumpery pretensions of Cornelius Webbe. The critic of the present day, who is still more cock-sure than our young lions of the Magazine, and rarely so effective, should take warning from such an extraordinary slip as this.

However, these young lions took the matter lightly enough, after the fashion of their age: though they were without doubt a little frightened by the idea of actions at law. They seem to have left Edinburgh while the first blast of the storm was raging, finally arriving, after various delays, in the Lake Country, where Wilson had his well-known house Elleray, on Windermere — leaving their publisher to bear the brunt: who stood like a rock, writing letters to all concerned, replying at once to indignant publishers, injured authors, and severe lawyers, with a civility and steadiness that never varied—and covering the real culprits with his ample shield. We doubt that he had probably some trouble too at home, and that the wife of his bosom would not hesitate to point out to him roundly the vexation into which his fine new Magazine, over which he had been so elated, had brought him, and what broken reeds were those writers, for whom all her life Mrs Blackwood retained an aggrieved contempt. The Magazine, however,

was selling, which was a great consolation; and Mr Graham Dalyell (in whose name some one of those incorrigible jokers wrote to Leigh Hunt, giving himself up as the anonymous Z, a laughable but unpardonable outrage), with his lawsuit, was an advertisement not perhaps too dearly purchased.

The alarm in the minds of the writers at the beginning of the Dalyell business lest they should be themselves betrayed, seems to have risen to a considerable height, though they bore the trouble of their publisher with great equanimity. The following correspondence shows the fluctuations of their feelings. The letters are as usual without date, but highly characteristic of the disposition and policy of the moment:—

John Wilson to W. Blackwood.

All you have to do is to keep up your mind in good fighting condition. In all you say or do commit neither yourself nor others, even to the best and most friendly. Infringe this rule, and you are no longer safe.

If Scott is secured—and I think there is little doubt of that—all is and must be well. Jeffrey is too knowing a man to care a straw about the matter. At the same time, be not too much concerned by anything you hear, nor elated. Let everything take its course, and, above all, let *us* speak and act for ourselves without any word or deed of yours. You should consult Cranstoun or some other first-rate man about Hunt. No doubt that is actionable. Whomsoever you consult retain in case of an action, and retain nobody but a first-rate man, and if possible a Whig. Cranstoun, being a Liberal himself, is the best person. Retain one only; and trust to chance for a junior counsel. A retaining fee is, I suppose, a trifle. Hunt will not, I think, bring an action, but he could. Speak or write to Cranstoun before Hunt can apply. Jeffrey, of course, would not advocate your cause against Hunt. Cockburn might, or

Moncreiff: all those three are unexceptionable. All this may be a bugbear, but "it has the face of a bear."

With whatever Scott says, agree; but commit yourself to no man. Do not apply to J. M. C. or L. A. till you hear or see something of us. Meanwhile, if you could get Scott's name—and when you tell him of your tribulations, perhaps you may—that alone would be victorious. Get all other names; think of admitting nothing dull or ordinary. Get Mackenzie ("Man of Feeling") if possible on your side. This number is of paramount importance. We have yet done nothing, but we are sure cards. Tell the brethren to write.

Another letter in a different tone is launched about the same time at the head of the sober charioteer who had that wild young plunging team in hand. It is a joint production from Lockhart and Wilson, the *us* emphatically underscored as in the above, and is written in alarm and fear that he has allowed himself to be thrown off his guard by the lawyers in the Dalyell process:—

Lockhart and Wilson to W. Blackwood.

If anything was understood when you left Glasgow [Lockhart begins], it was *this*, that to all questions, speeches, hints, innuendoes about the Vision, its authors, its objects, its consequences, *you should be dumb.* The only exceptions we made were in favour of Mr C. and his brother, John More and Cranstoun. Now, how after all this, and after all the letters which have passed, you could have allowed yourself to hold any conversation whatever on this subject with Hotchkis [the agent of Dalyell], far more how you could ever have dreamed for a moment of allowing to him the possibility of D. being satirised there, or the possibility of your having any occasion to "appease the feelings" of anybody under the sun—is to me, I confess, wholly incomprehensible. Cranstoun when you went to him knew perfectly well all about the matter, and his apparent incapacity to understand the allusions was meant to teach you

to profess and assume equal incapacity. I fear, I greatly fear, you have now virtually acknowledged a libel. That we should get rid of all suspicions we never expected; and now, in addition to the original sin, we are to be lugged into the charge of pusillanimity, and of being bamboozled by Dalyell and his friends. I trust you have not proceeded any length in the matter. If you have, God grant your game may not be up. If you have committed us in the way we fear, whatever our feelings are, and always must be towards *you*, it will become a subject of serious consideration what further part we are to take in the concerns of the Magazine.

This, in its clear small incisive handwriting, but underlined like a (proverbial) lady's letter, in nervous anger and alarm, is supplemented in the larger scrawly careless hand of Wilson, with a sort of bigger but softer echo of the tone of the other. Lockhart's voice is rarely without a certain sharpness.

Dear Sir [writes Wilson], (this letter is most friendly but absolute). I am dining out, and have no time to say much. All the above I approve. Have nothing to do with D. or anybody else till we see you. We are your staunch friends. Be true to yourself and us, and fear nothing. The Vision is not actionable. Be that as it may, if you follow your own opinions or those of any other man after your solemn engagements with us to the contrary, how can you expect anything but confusion and disgrace? Any kind of *submission* or *parley* with him is death.

All this apparently concerns the action of Mr Dalyell. There is a sort of schoolboy vehemence in the tremendous assertion of the "solemn engagements" and the underscoring of every emphatic word. Blackwood was but moderately moved by these adjurations. He wrote no laments nor outcries of alarm, but stood fast in his steady way, keeping their youth-

ful secrets (which they themselves betrayed freely), and paying up when necessary,—not, we presume, without an occasional wry face. But though it was very serious, and sometimes the possibilities of that ugly thing, ruin, came unpleasantly near, yet he was not without the more astute wisdom of the man of the world, and knew in the bottom of his heart that—as Mr Murray stated that great article of faith—everything could be made to pay in one way or another, damages and other evil things included.

One of those days, the evening of the one probably in which the above philippic was written, a few lines "are sent in addition over our oysters"—from the same twin brethren, with a wild demand for material for the "Office of Constable," to be wrought up into "an antiquarian article in next number." "Send therefore to the 'Scorpion' as soon as possible all the facts of the Crafty's life from youth upwards. The other materials we have: all disagreeable topics to be avoided, and the laughter innocent and amiable." Then follows, in Lockhart's neat hand, "This I think bids fair to beat Riddell's 'On the office of Marechall' all to nothing. Let your account of the Crafty be as full and precise as your leisure will permit, and trust everything for Tournaments, Coats of Arms, &c., &c., to the well-known author of the celebrated article 'Heraldry' in your 'Encyclopædia.'" So the young men would have stormed along, caring not much for anything but fun and fighting. It is to be supposed, however, that here the graver will stood fast, for we do not think the proposed essay on "The Office of Constable" was ever written.

Lockhart, in his turn, echoed Wilson's advice to

secure the help, or at least the countenance, of Scott as the one necessity of salvation. "Get Scott, and you get everything," he wrote from amid the Westmoreland hills, whence the two authors of the mischief watched the explosion from afar; but he urges caution as before—and his view altogether of the circumstances is more serious than that of his companion. He adjures his correspondent:—

Be extremely cautious in giving even to him names or power unnecessary. But secure him: 1st, To write a paper in No. 2. 2nd, To speak against the exclusion of your Magazine—should such an inquisitorial and absurd measure be talked of—in a Faculty[1] meeting. 3rd, Not to say any ill of you, your Magazine, or virtually of the Chaldee MS. itself. Upon him everything depends, for in any Faculty meeting, where literature is concerned, who can stand against Maugraby? Besides, should it be necessary, the Advocate also *must* speak, and Wilson *will.*

Till we hear what Dalyell says, we cannot be easy; but we think that if he does anything violent, it will be against his nature, and only in consequence of the baiting of the adversary, willing to avenge himself at the expense of the 3rd beast. See Swift's letter, and Lord Molesworth's story of the Jew of Madrid: "The boys were afraid they should lose their sport, so they clapped the poor Jew on the back all the way to the stake, saying, *Sta ferme, Möyse.*" For myself I have no fear, provided you procure when necessary, but not till necessary, the avowed countenance of Scott. Wilson occupies higher ground than I do, and has less to fear. We are both firm and steadfast. Of course you will write daily.

P.S.—If you are really publishing or advertising a 2nd edition of the Oct. number, add this motto: "Rara temporum felicitas ubi sentire quæ velis, ut quæ sentias dicere licet." *This must be, and stand.* Put this into your very first advertisement at all events. It is of Wilson's suggestion, and is most excellent.

Mr Blackwood, however, had a more effectual

[1] Meaning, we presume, from the Library of the Faculty of Advocates.

method of approaching and attaching Scott than any his correspondents suggested, and happily it was one which had been put in operation before the necessity arose. It was well known, and indeed too seriously proved in the case of the Ballantynes, that for his friends, and especially those who could in any way be called his dependants, Scott's generosity was boundless, and that there was no trouble which he was not ready to take to promote their interests. On the occasion of beginning the new series of the Magazine, Blackwood had at once resorted to the greatest of living authorities on literature for his help.

Anything from you, whether in prose or verse [he wrote to Scott], would be perfectly invaluable to me at present. I hope you may have something lying past you which you may not be intending to use otherwise, and which you may perhaps honour me with. There is no sum I could offer that would be proportionate to the value to me of any communication from you, however short; but should you do me this singular favour, I hope you will permit me to present you with something as an expression of my sense of the obligation.

These were the days, as I have hinted before, in which remuneration was suggested with delicacy, as beneath the exquisite feelings and purpose of a writer, notwithstanding the large sums which were paid to the great authors of the day. In a later letter the astute bookseller puts his bait upon the hook:—

W. Blackwood to Walter Scott.

I have heard my friend, Mr Hogg, frequently speaking in very high terms of a Mr Laidlaw, in whom, he told me, you took an interest. I do not know his address, else I would write to him with regard to communications on rural affairs, with which I understand he is well acquainted. This was to have been, as announced in my Prospectus, one of the branches

of the 'Edinburgh Monthly Magazine,' but Mr Cleghorn, from his connection in another quarter, carefully excluded everything of the kind. From the nature of the work, there cannot be much space allowed for articles connected with agriculture; still, if Mr Laidlaw would undertake them, he could always have something every month.

That the big fish swallowed this fine bait as sweetly as could be desired is clear. The following reply from Scott I have found after some difficulty, with the date of Abbotsford, 21st September, and evidently in direct answer to that above quoted:—

Walter Scott to W. Blackwood.

I would have written to you long since had anything occurred worth plaguing you about. But from an idle man—and such I have been, from the necessity of taking much hard exercise to keep the cramps at [arm's-length]—there is but little to be looked for, always excepting the gratitude due for the Stirling Heads,[1] which are most beautiful. I think of getting some of them done for the ornament above the compartments of my library here, which they will accord with very happily.

On the subject of the Magazine, I am too much a veteran of literature to be surprised at the unexpected shoals on which the fairest undertakings sometimes are wrecked, or at the unforeseen causes of difference which occur between publishers and authors. Mr Pringle wrote me a few lines on the subject, to which I answered, expressing the interest I feel for Scottish literature and its supporters in general, and my intention to be completely neutral, reserving the privilege of contributing any trifling assistance to either or to both publications. Indeed, understanding that the principal conduct of yours is committed to the charge of a gentleman whose talents are of the highest order, and whose good opinions and goodwill have been expressed to me in more ways than one, it is naturally to be supposed I should be desirous of aiding a work he is interested

[1] A book of engravings published by Blackwood.

in, so far as I have it in my power. As to any pecuniary recompense, I cannot in conscience stipulate or accept of any; for as it can be only broken hints, detached fragments, and so forth, that I can offer, and that but occasionally, I would be very unreasonable to exact any emolument for such trifles, nor have I any thoughts of doing so.

It is, however, in your power to interest me more deeply in the success of your attempt, in the event of your securing, as you propose, the assistance of my friend, Mr William Laidlaw, on the footing of a regular contributor. He is one of my oldest and best friends in this country—a man of a singularly original and powerful mind, acquainted with science, well skilled in literature, and an excellent agriculturist. Having lately given up an over-rented farm, he is at present inhabiting a farmhouse of mine called Kaeside, about half a mile from me, and I am heartily desirous, both for his sake and my own, to secure myself the benefit of his neighbourhood, as he is *amicus omnium bonorum*, my confidential adviser on rural economy, and my companion in field sports. If, therefore, you should think it advisable to trust to Mr Laidlaw for supplying a certain portion of your Magazine with agricultural or literary articles, I have not the least doubt they will be executed to your satisfaction, and will consider myself as completely responsible for what he may supply. He shall have my best advice and frequent assistance; and as a very special friend of mine answered Dr Lawson of Selkirk, when in the course of the Carritch they came to the question, "What is Effectual Calling?" "I have little doubt we will make it out between us." But, my good sir, if I am to give this sort of pledge, the emolument derived to Mr Laidlaw's family must be such as will answer my selfish purpose of keeping him in my neighbourhood, and that will cost you such a rate of copy money as shall enable him to make at least £120 per annum. Mr Laidlaw is a good antiquary, and both he and I would have pleasure in contributing to that branch. He has by him an excellent essay on converting high and over-ploughed lands into grass, written for the benefit of your humble servant in a manner likely to be generally interesting. I have a curious letter of the well-known Chevalier Ramsay to Mr Bayers on the state, political and

economical, of France about sixty years since, and I darêsay I can find some other quodlibets for your starting number if you think my plan likely to answer.

I am glad there is a chance of our seeing Mr Moore, and sincerely happy that Mr Irving liked Abbotsford as much as its inhabitants liked him.

Laidlaw—the well-beloved Willie Laidlaw of Scott's Life—also answered with expedition, but evident trepidation, as follows:—

W. Laidlaw to W. Blackwood.

Mr Scott has made me acquainted with a correspondence between you and himself respecting my co-operation in the new series of your Magazine. It is, as you say, somewhat like a new work, and really I must say that your proposal of a tryst for six months appears to me reasonable in several views. For, notwithstanding whatever Mr Scott's partiality may lead him to think, my experience in literary labour has assuredly not been much. I am apt to judge that a monthly report of rural affairs cannot be made very interesting, and rarely useful, especially during the summer months: perhaps a short notice of the weather and its probable effects would be enough, and I would do my best to put together a respectable quarterly report. I have one or two articles in view that might be rendered not uninteresting, particularly one addressed some time ago to Mr Scott, and which he has often honoured by his approbation. It is upon the best way of laying down his higher grounds in improved and permanent pasture. As whatever I send will have the honour of passing through Mr Scott's hands, I beg to throw myself on his judgment likewise for what emolument I ought to have for the six months.

Some short time later we have another cheerful and lively letter from Scott, giving his opinion of the first of some articles on the authentic history of Rob Roy, which had a special interest at the moment from the

fact that Scott's novel of that name had just been announced for speedy publication. He then adds:—

Scott to W. Blackwood.

Mr Laidlaw projects a series of letters under the signature of Maugraby. I shall certainly revise and correct them, and if I should write any at length you will understand that I reserve the right of printing such myself, should I ever think it proper, which is highly improbable. Respecting my name in this matter, you will understand that I merely assist Mr Laidlaw, and you are quite at liberty to say that I do so. But as to my fathering any particular portion of the correspondence, you must hold me excused if I leave that matter to your own sagacity of detection and that of the public. In fact, were I obliged to take pains—and this I must if I were to make myself responsible for what I write—my contributions would be very few indeed. Besides I may, for aught I know, give something or other to Mr Pringle, who would expect me to favour them also; so I should be like the poor fellow who was obliged to fly the country in consequence of having rather too numerous an irregular progeny.

The link thus established between Blackwood and the one effectual friend whom he was so much urged to secure no doubt gave him courage; but yet there was a tremor in his tone when on the fateful 20th of October he forwarded the first number of the revived Magazine to Abbotsford, with copious and enthusiastic thanks for "the sanction and support" given to his undertaking, "and that I now have it in my power to say that the work is one that has your good wishes even in the way of the slightest assistance to Mr Laidlaw." "I hope," he adds, "that you will be pleased with this number on the whole, and I think that it is likely to make some noise. I anxiously hope you will not be displeased by the Chaldee MS.

There were various opinions as to the propriety of publishing this. The Editor[1] took his own way, and I cannot interfere with him. When you have leisure I hope you will do me the honour to tell me how you like any of the articles."

Not having apparently any immediate reply from Scott, whose support was so important, Blackwood wrote again shortly after to Laidlaw, hoping thus to have an expression of his patron's views. Laidlaw himself would seem to have praised the number, in which his own contributions filled a humble place.

W. Blackwood to W. Laidlaw.

29th October 1817.

I am truly happy you are so much pleased with this number. I intended to have had the pleasure of seeing you either yesterday or to-day, and therefore thought it needless to write. I have, however, been much occupied by disagreeable discussions, in consequence of the hue and cry attempted to be raised by Constable and his adherents against me on account of the article entitled Chaldee MSS. No one can regret more than I do that this article appeared. After I saw it in proof, I did everything I could to prevent it, and at last succeeded in getting the Editor to leave it out. In the course of a day, however, he changed his mind, and determined that it should be in. I was therefore placed in a terrible dilemma; and as I must have stopped the Magazine if I did not allow the Editor to have his own way, I was obliged to submit. I was in hopes it would have been laughed over as a cruel joke enough, but that it would soon have been forgot, there is so much excellent

[1] This title is often but vaguely given to some undiscoverable person in the early days of the Magazine, the convenient partner who was always responsible and ever regrettably inclined to take his own way. As a matter of fact the Magazine was, as might be said officially, in commission, with a governing body of three, no individual of which was supreme, though the publisher lamented the self-will of the Editor, and the Editor vituperated with much force the obstinacy of the publisher.

matter in the Magazine to redeem it. The enemy, however, has been so active in stirring up individuals that several are highly irritated who would only have laughed at it. He is trying to form a party against me, if it were possible, to put down both me and the Magazine. My friends, however, are not inactive; and the storm is beginning, I hope, to subside.

Little as we yet know of each other, I trust to your friendship in supporting me on the present occasion. I anxiously hope that Mr Scott will continue his most important countenance. To me at this moment it is of the last consequence, and would set my mind quite at ease. I have no fears as to his taking amiss the sportive way in which he is introduced in the MS., as I know it is not possible for a human being to have a higher admiration and respect for Mr Scott than the author has and uniformly expresses. It is most painful for me to think that any part of this unfortunate production may be unpleasant to Mr Scott, or might have the smallest tendency to weaken the lively interest he has taken in the Magazine. I trust to his candour to feel for me in the unpleasant situation in which I have been placed, and I hope, if there should be occasion for it, that you will exert your best efforts in my behalf. You will of course mention this to Mr Scott in any way you think best.

The answer of Scott himself was not long delayed, though it is, like so many of these letters, without date. His comments, though disapproving, were not such as to alarm the anxious publisher with fears for the discontinuance of his support:—

Walter Scott to W. Blackwood.

I have been for several days at Bowhill, and afterwards engaged with visitors here, which has prevented my writing. Mr Laidlaw showed me a letter this morning about the Chaldean article in your last Magazine, which I hasten to reply to in person. The article (which, from not being acquainted with names and references, I was long of comprehending) possesses a great deal of satirical humour, but the prudence of publishing

it may be seriously questioned. Edinburgh is rather too narrow for satire so markedly personal, and there are certainly several individuals who, from their character and situation, have reason to resent having been so roughly treated. And I must add that, disapproving of the whole in point of prudence, I am not greatly pleased with the mode in which one or two of my particular friends have been mentioned, as, for example, Playfair, Charles Sharpe, and Robert Jamieson. You will readily hold me acquitted of the childishness of resenting the good-humoured pleasantry exercised towards myself, with which I was really entertained, and thought the humour very well sustained. Connected as I am with Mr Laidlaw, and regarding the continuance of the work as a matter of consequence to him, I have no idea of suffering my disapprobation of a particular article, on the grounds I have expressed, to interfere with my promised assistance to him. I do not know any of my friends (meaning such as may have a right to complain of aggression in the present case) who would wish me to resent their quarrel at the risque of disturbing an arrangement made with the views which influenced me in entering into the present. This you will of course understand to be very different from either approving the insertion of the article or subscribing to the justice of the satire. And unquestionably did I conceive it likely that the Magazine could continue to be a receptacle for articles, however able, composed in the same tone, I could not, consistently with my feelings of what is due to the literary society of Edinburgh, continue my permanent assistance. The field for fair pleasantry is wide enough without enlarging it at the expense of exciting, and not unjustly, feelings of personal and private resentment.

My time for leaving this place now approaches so nearly that it would perhaps be giving you trouble and expense to little purpose to invite you out here. If, however, you should think it of consequence to see Mr Laidlaw and me together, I will be happy to receive you any day next week.

The piece of "good-humoured pleasantry" which Scott took so kindly might have been construed less favourably by a less genial nature, and certainly sug-

gested the idea of a facing-both-ways, which was not unlike his real position between the opponents, with neither of whom he had any intention of quarrelling. How perfectly just and far-seeing had been that satire is apparent from his letters: for he had indeed taken precisely the position given him by the wits, holding the rivals with a calmly impartial hand, and conscious that, "for all I know, I may give something or other to Mr Pringle too." "Your adversary is also among my familiars," the Chaldee MS. had made him say to both, repeating the same words. What he thought, in his private mind, of the more thin-skinned individuals who made the outcry, is evident from the following letter to Laidlaw:—

I saw Blackwood yesterday, and Hogg the day before, and I understand from them that you think of resigning the Chronicle part of the Magazine. Blackwood told me that if you did not like that part of the duty he would consider himself accountable for the same sum he had specified to you for any other articles you might communicate from time to time. If you really do not like the Chronicle, there can be no harm in your giving it up. What strikes me is that there is something certain in having such a department to conduct, whereas you may sometimes find yourself at a loss when you have to cast about for a subject every month. Blackwood is rather in a bad pickle just now,—sent to Coventry by the Trade, as the booksellers name themselves, and all about the parody of the two beasts. Surely these gentlemen think themselves rather formed of porcelain clay than of common potters' ware. Dealing in satire against all others, their own dignity suffers so cruelly from an ill-imagined book! If B. had good books to sell, he might set them all at defiance. His Magazine does well, and beats Constable.

The occasion of this communication to Laidlaw was an apparent fright taken by him that Blackwood

might find him "a dead-weight, only made endurable by the assistance of Mr Scott's powerful pen," which was a true suggestion enough. "I learnt," Laidlaw says, "in course of our conversation that the high literary tone and character your Magazine had acquired, and which it was necessary to keep up, had got rather above agricultural subjects, and this appeared to me with greater force from knowing that Hogg's spirited paper on a very interesting process in the management of sheep had been found inconsistent with it." A further conversation with Wilson, who said "he took no hand in editing the work," showed Laidlaw that the register of public events both foreign and abroad, which had been put into his charge, was considered unnecessary by that very influential person. What was the good man to do?—to be a dead-weight was terrible to his pride: but it would be a slight to Mr Scott to throw up an engagement which he had formed. He could only appeal to the publisher to tell him frankly what was the true state of affairs. We do not find any conclusion to this little episode. The Chronicle or Register, however, which at first even went so far as to contain births, marriages, and deaths, was continued for a considerable time. And Scott not only judiciously advised Laidlaw not to throw away his bread and butter, but went on helping him without intermission.

I enclose [he writes to Blackwood] the Chronicle and an article which we must see in proof, as clubbing our information we had but just time to have it copied over. I am sorry I have no loose poetry, but I never keep copies of anything not written for the Press; so all my trifles are either selected and printed or lost. I never write poetry nowadays. If I find I

am essentially assisting my friend Mr L., I have little doubt of occasionally assisting the Magazine, as much as any curious stray information, anecdotes, &c., may be gathered in this country.

It was Lockhart whom Sir Walter recognised as the head; many others selected Wilson; these two, best informed of all, though they sometimes rebelled, generally submitted, though with a very bad grace, as shall be seen hereafter, to the strong resolution of the "man in plain apparel," whose silent strength was behind them, and upon whose comparatively innocent head all the bolts fell.

Another letter from Scott conveys the idea that he was occasionally consulted as a critic by Blackwood, and consented to help him in that way. "I return you," he says on one occasion, "the MS. Voyage."

The latter part of it is interesting; in the first there is too much description of well-known places; and through the whole there is a little ambition of fine writing, which spoils the effect of a plain narration. Also the manuscript poem, which is of the kind endured neither by gods, men, nor columns. . . . I return also Wat Tyler, which is an ill-natured book. But it may be a warning to men of genius not to enunciate all their first ideas too strongly on political subjects.

A letter of Laidlaw, received in February of the next year (1818), while the fight was yet at its hottest, gives Blackwood still more distinctly the assurance that he had "secured Scott." His agricultural contributor was Scott's right-hand man in all his diggings and plantings, though but a very simple henchman in literature:—

W. Laidlaw to W. Blackwood.

Mr Scott left us this morning. He has been riding and walking about from morning to night, and all our talk was of

rural affairs; but I see that he has decidedly taken part with you, so far as the Magazine goes, at least. I was sorry I had nothing in such a finished state as to give him, but I will try and send him something before next No.

The connection with Laidlaw thus continued, in spite of what he himself calls "the imperfect Scotch" of his foreign intelligence: and the fact that Hogg's "spirited paper on the management of sheep" was not received, while Laidlaw's agricultural notes were always palatable, was very clearly due to the desire to retain Scott's help and friendship by benefiting his retainer—a motive reasonable enough even without the help, the "clubbing of information," the revisal and correction of honest Laidlaw's manuscript, to which the great man pledged himself. The contract was quite open on both sides. Laidlaw got his steady remuneration—not fluctuating, as Scott reminds him, but to be calculated upon; and Blackwood got the invaluable name, and not a few effective lines and paragraphs quickly divined by the public. "A little touch from him tells far," says Laidlaw in one of his letters. Turning over one of those faded Magazines—the most excellent reading, and indeed vibrating still with life and energy—we suddenly came on an account of a wonderful feat on the part of a sheep-dog, in which the hand of Scott is plainly visible. The picture is as beautiful and the story as thrilling as if it had involved the loftiest passion or the most complex thoughts.

It may amuse the reader if we remind him that Scott was lending this kind and friendly aid just a year after the author of 'Waverley' had d——d Blackwood for a criticism to which he was all

unaccustomed. Had he avenged that offence, or done more than blow off the hasty exasperation in a word, he might have seriously injured, perhaps ruined, at that very important crisis of his career, the sturdy and independent bookseller. But he was no such man, and lent his honest friendly hand to his honest critic with all the magnanimity of his nature. "Whatever record leaps to light, he never shall be shamed."

A letter from Lockhart, which I have found quite accidentally fastened up with the letter from Scott on page 146, and evidently written at the same time, gives so clear a picture of the general agitation and excitement that I may include it here before passing on to other features of the fray:—

J. G. Lockhart to W. Blackwood.

I write chiefly because I imagine it will be agreeable for you to hear from one of us each day, so long as the battle is unfinished. The correspondence, if preserved, may afford us all much diversion at some distant day. Surely you were allowing too much vanity to mingle with your usual discernment when you suppose that C. and Jeffrey went to the fastness [Abbotsford] merely to annoy the man in plain apparel and his book. However, being there, they may do you harm, and the letter to Laidlaw is the likeliest counterplot you could have invented. I send this along with the Leven MSS. Set up in type forthwith Lee's review of Madam de Staël. These will both, we think, be good in this number. And omit anything against Sharpe in the conclusion. Should he take violent ground against us in the adversary's book, woe be to him hereafter! In the meantime he merits a sugar-plum. Wilson is anxious to see Hamilton before going to Edinburgh, but seems now to think he will certainly be with you by Saturday evening. I shall not be later than Tuesday, nor can I possibly be sooner, or I would. I wish you would write me out literatim some of

the sarcasms at present going against us both. We have as yet heard only far-off hints.

This cursed row has so unhinged us both that we have done nothing. I think, however, you may depend on a eulogy of Chalmers and the Office of Constable from me. Should any want of materials occur, I will retouch an essay (by me) on the Religious Orders of Knighthood, originally designed for your vile Encyclopædia. But what fear have you when once the mighty creatures are within your gates, and I daresay Hogg has been doing something. Wilson will, I hope, write some accounts of an awful scene we witnessed to-day, the execution of three men: keep him to that idea. To-morrow I trust we shall have some minutes of conversation with Cranstoun or Moncrieff. If N. does not take care I will introduce him as the High Constable's *fool* at some tournament. Dalyell must be the dwarf. Do not allow a day to pass without writing, and to me, for the Leopard's goings forth are irregular as well as comely. If he stays here much longer the whole family will be as much in love with him as you and I.

Tony Smith hints, *I suspect from authority*, something about a d——d attack on you (and probably some besides you) in next number of 'Maggie Reekie.' Make use of some means to ascertain the real intentions of the 3rd beast.

This letter is signed "The Scorpion"; the fumes of the explosion to which they had set light being evidently still in all their senses. 'Maggie Reekie' was the magazine of Constable.

The war went on, however, with intervals for a long time, raging about the devoted head of the only responsible person in the matter. Pamphlets were written, actions brought, abuse of all descriptions poured upon Mr Blackwood. No doubt many arrows were also sent in the dark against the unseen contributors; but they kept silent, except occasionally by a new sting in the Magazine, which redoubled the fury of their enemies and wore out the patience of

their friends. Mr Murray had accepted, from its second beginning, a share in the responsibility, and his name had appeared upon the title-page of the Magazine. He had been an anxious and indeed tremulous spectator of the great commotion caused by No. 1 of the New Series; but even the first threatenings of actions for libel were not sufficient to detach him from an enterprise in which his acute and experienced faculties showed him possibilities of both money and influence. The correspondence between Blackwood and his London coadjutor became thus more frequent, though it was always a little irregular and stormy. Mr Murray longed to interfere, to shape the Magazine after his own mind. "I don't care a farthing for talent," he says, quoting a London critic.

> The prominent feature of the Magazine should be literary and scientific news, and most of all the latter, for which your editors appear to have little estimation, and they seem not to be the least aware that this is ten times more interesting to the public than any other class of literature at present. . . . You have unfortunately too much of the Lake School, for which no interest is felt here. Give us foreign literature, particularly German, and let them create *news* in all departments.

It would almost seem a humorous adoption of this advice, in a very different meaning from that intended, which made Lockhart create not only news but the reporters of the said news, in the persons of Baron von Lauerwinkel, Professor Sauerteig, and others (predecessors and probably progenitors of the immortal Teufelsdröckh), whose serio-comic communications bewildered the reader in many succeeding numbers. Murray, however, not quite so easily frightened as

Messrs Baldwin & Cradock, held on for some time, despite all these vagaries, though they irritated and vexed him; but his irritation, as well as that of the victims, was chiefly directed against Blackwood, of whom he heard many jealous murmurs on the part of "the Trade," and whom he reproaches on one occasion as being trusted by none of his brother booksellers. To this letter Blackwood made a spirited reply. "You have been misinformed on some points, and perhaps unjust on others," he says. The letter is dated 28th April 1818:—

W. Blackwood to John Murray.

In the first place, I must tell you that you labour under a grievous mistake in supposing that I have excited the hostility of my brethren. The quarter you must have got such intelligence from might have led you to suspect its truth. Had you ever given me the smallest hint on the subject, I could have told you that on the contrary the real men of business and those worth caring for are as well disposed towards me as ever, and indeed well pleased to see me a counterpoise to Constable. You know well enough his implacable hatred of me, and his rage at seeing your review and all your books flourishing so much, and of course so many of them sold by me for you. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that my Magazine was a new source of vexation to him. Unfortunately for me, at the time, the Chaldee MS. gave him and his partisans something on which to ground their attacks. They, however, carried them so far that in a very short time the public saw through the selfish object; and I gained much more than I lost by it, as my friends rallied round me, and many came forward who were formerly unknown to me. As a specimen of the way they attacked me personally and some of my friends, I send you some of the scurrilous pamphlets. These tracts, though not published by Constable, were printed at his expense, and industriously circulated. I never thought of taking any notice of them, nor did I ever complain of their conduct. It is not my province to vindicate everything that has been

published in the Magazine; but this I will be bold to say, that there was nothing in it which is discreditable, while there may be things which I might have wished otherwise, but over which I had no control. For the general impression with regard to the Magazine I refer you to Mr Scott, who has been my steady friend and supporter in the whole conflict or battle of the beasts. In a letter I had from him two days ago, he says, with regard to one person who is angry, "This is just as it ought to be, for jades do not wince but when they are galled."

I have found it necessary to be thus minute with regard to the Magazine, as I cannot conceive any other circumstances upon which my enemies can have ventured to misrepresent my conduct to you.

Of the pamphlets above referred to we have ample specimens at hand, but perhaps it is unnecessary to enter into recriminations which, not having even the guise of story, nor any wings of humour and fun like those of the Chaldee MS., but only downright abuse and accusation, would not be either entertaining or important to any man nowadays. The Chaldee MS. has kept a footing in literary history because of its skill and literary excellence, not because of its abuse, which few understand and no one cares for. Constable and Blackwood now are both judged on their merits, of which they had many. When our own age passes into history we may doubt whether it will have it in its power to show many men of the same class, so individual and characteristic, so interesting in their personality and picturesque in their position. The rival houses in England produced nobody likely to compete with them in this respect in the qualities that make an interesting record. Their strife has blown away like smoke, and unless we are very strait-laced indeed, it amuses us to hear of it, though

not half so much as it amused and excited them to carry it on. But the dust may be allowed to lie without being swept up in our faces. Dust, like all other things, has its good as well as its bad qualities; it softens the outlines and takes off the sharpness of many a hard corner. The bad sculptures in Westminster and other places, for instance, would be worse but for this softening-down. It is so in the inner as well as in the outer world.

Murray, however, though he would seem to have continued uneasy about the polemics, and to have felt his personal repose endangered, was still sufficiently encouraged by the success of the Magazine, and what nowadays would be called the excellent advertisement procured by all its conflicts and tumults, to enter formally into partnership with Mr Blackwood in the undertaking, paying a thousand pounds for a half share — which proceeding naturally made him more critical than ever. His advice was excellent, if not very palatable. We are unaware what victory is referred to—probably the withdrawal of threatened actions on the part of Hunt or Hazlitt, the much assaulted members of the Cockney School:—

John Murray to W. Blackwood.

I cannot congratulate you on your victory; another such, says Pyrrhus, and we are ruined. Do as you would be done by. I will venture my existence that you are injuring your character in the opinion of every one whose good opinion is worth having. I cannot perceive your object in literally running amuck at every one; and I would not undergo your feelings for any worldly advantage. I am sure you are wrong; but I have not time to write moral [lectures], even if there were any chance of their provoking or meriting alteration.

But, above all, take my advice and pray to God that you may live in peace with your neighbours, and believe that this freedom arises from the best wishes for your prosperity.

A temporary and comparative calm would seem to have followed the first explosion. The young lions, perhaps a little alarmed at the immediate consequences of their rashness, roared more gently; and though there was no drawing back, there was not either any new aggression. But as the year went on the old spirit of mischief began again to get the upper hand, and several articles appeared which drew from Mr Murray a very strong remonstrance, made all the stronger by his expressions of regret that he should be compromised by being the publisher of such productions. The following letter, which I find in the 'Memoirs of John Murray,' is probably the one addressed to Mr Blackwood on this occasion. It is dated September 28, 1818:—

John Murray to W. Blackwood.

I have delayed writing for no other reason than that I was desirous of gathering from all quarters the opinion respecting our Magazine, and you will believe how great my own regret is at finding the clamour against its personality almost universal. You must naturally be aware that all eyes are turned towards me, who am so accessible from situation and the open house I keep, when compared to the Row, where no one goes except on positive business. I feel seriously and sensibly the operation of opinions at which I only guessed before. I have undergone most severe remonstrances from my best and most important friends, who press upon me my character with the public, in which they are naturally interested and in some degree implicated; that even if I were right, it is not what I think but what the public will think of me for stepping out of a line of conduct which hitherto has gained assent from all parties.

Now what applies to me in this respect, from the accident of my being rather more in the public eye than either you or your friends have been as yet, applies also, as I think you will admit, no less to yourselves; and you must be aware that what would depreciate opinion respecting me must naturally operate in a similar degree upon you. My hands are withered by it. I cannot offer the work without the dread of reproachful refusal, and as to obtaining contributions from men of character, I might as soon ask them to let me stab them in their back.

This letter, perhaps, was not exactly of a kind to please Blackwood, who was not disposed to transfer his personal responsibility to any man, and to whom the assumption of Mr Murray as the principal person in the transaction, the man to whom all eyes were turned, could scarcely be very palatable. He wrote, however, with much temper and calmness, and an evident desire to keep the peace, assuring his friend that in future everything would go well, and that the passion of the beginning was now to be restrained.

It is needless [he says] for you to distress yourself about what is past; for really when you examine the matter again coolly and calmly, there is no such ground for alarm as you fear and your friends have conjured up. And as for the future I now feel perfectly at ease. Your letter has pleased and satisfied our friends. Mr Wilson has called just now, and I have the happiness of enclosing a most admirable letter which they have written this morning, and which in fact leaves me almost nothing to say.

The letter enclosed is as follows:—

Lockhart and Wilson to John Murray.

Mr Wilson and I have read your letter to Mr Blackwood with much regret, for we are well aware how much it must be against your feelings and interests as well as our own that the Magazine should expose those concerned in it to such troubles as you have now described. We are willing to take your opinion

on the matter as decisive, and admit that something out of the common order has been done, and that something of an outcry does exist, and that, therefore, independently of all argument, it is the duty of all that some change should take place.

The next thing to be considered is whether this outcry has not been somewhat exaggerated to you by your own imagination—to ascertain, in short, to what extent it is truth. This may probably be best accomplished by tracing the outcry to its elements, by discovering what the combustibles have been that can have raised the fire. We know of nothing but the Chaldee MS., the verses on the Booksellers, the attacks on the Cockneys, and those on the 'Edinburgh Review.' Let it be granted, then, that in each and all of these indiscretion and violence have been used. But is this enough to have given a general bad name to a book wherein all these things taken together form a very, very small item of contents—where they are outbalanced by such a preponderance of good calm feeling and principle? Our own opinion is that, notwithstanding all the outcry you have heard, and which has distressed abundantly us as well as you, were the voice of the whole town and country taken, the odium excited is neither so general nor so terrific as you apprehend. It is the nature of whatever is new to astonish. People must have time given them to come to their wits. In different parts of the country where we have been, we have found that among two great classes of our own countrymen, the religious and the ministerial people, the sensation excited by the Magazine has been decidedly a very encouraging one, although these people, and those from whom they most differ, have indeed found faults and blamed them. This applies of course to a limited circle and experience; but perhaps your town circle and experience may also be in their way limited—*i.e.*, you may have conversed too exclusively with literary men, who have fears, hopes, and opinions peculiar to themselves, not partaken except reflexly and weakly by the main body of English readers, in whose minds we have no doubt the general good feeling and principle of the Magazine, were that work once fairly put into their hands, must infinitely outweigh all the defects with which we admit it to be deformed. Look at the last two numbers alone and examine what it is you are afraid of. In August, with the

exception of "Hazlitt Cross-questioned" (of which anon), there is not one word to be ashamed of. In September we can perceive nothing that can give rational offence. The article on M'Vey is confined entirely to his literary pretensions; and that on Playfair is, we conceive, not only merited and unanswerable, but so written as no gentleman need be ashamed to have signed it. That both of these will give offence to some friends of the parties who doubts? and what severe articles, either in your Review or Jeffrey's, do not give offence in the same manner? Must not you have exaggerated things when you talk of wishing not to have published numbers containing these articles of offence alone. Take them, read them over, and say if, with the exception of Hazlitt, there is one page that might not have appeared in any work—in so far at least as the spirit is concerned? I have pressed this on you, not that I think you are giving unfounded statements, but that I think you have overcharged a true outline.

With respect to Hazlitt there is no doubt that your observations are just. There is a seeming ferocity in the tone that must disgust many, and on reflection disgusts us. With those to whom Hazlitt is an utter stranger such an article must have seemed execrable. To those who know the truth of the worst things that can be said of him, the principal fault of the article will appear to be confined to its manner and expressions. We quite agree with you that the same thing might have been said in a different, in a very much better way; and rest assured that of this execrable style no further specimen shall appear. However, doubt not that the frenzy and wrath of Hunt, Hazlitt, &c., are the true keys to all these fierce paragraphs in the papers, and much of what has distressed you in conversation.

On this part of the subject allow me to remark that, with the exception of this last article on Hazlitt, the articles on the Cockney School are little if at all more severe than those in the 'Quarterly Review,' and that they gave more offence to the objects of their severity only on account of their superior keenness—above all, that happy name which you and all the reviews are now borrowing, the Cockney School. Hazlitt and Hunt conceived that they could crush an infant work, and knew that they were powerless against the 'Quarterly.' There-

fore against us did they pour their hottest phials. Give yourself no uneasiness about this, however, as if the action is brought at all, it will be brought here. But do not condescend for a moment to think of giving Hazlitt either answer or satisfaction of any kind. Let him fret on; in the end he will do nothing. And ultimately, at the very worst, without doubt your innocence can be established, were it possible that it should be called in question. Be satisfied that if you were to show any sign of condescension or apprehension you would be taking the most effectual means for encouraging him.

Henceforward nothing reprehensible shall appear. We must take care that nothing dull appears, for that were still more hurtful. We both are much obliged to you for the full manner in which you have written: at all times continue to act in the same way.

The name of the Magazine was chosen without our advice, and we always disliked it. Whether the advantages or the disadvantages of alteration would predominate it is your [the publishers'] province to determine. We cannot help thinking that the outcry would gather strength from the confession such a measure would seem to imply; and Mr Blackwood, we suspect, would feel great repugnance to seeing his own name sacrificed, as it were, as a peace-offering. Settle this, however, among yourselves, and do nothing rashly. Let not any uncomfortable feelings, which are probably of a momentary nature, be allowed to do permanent injury to your work. Mr Wilson and I stand entirely neuter. If you think seriously of alteration, consult your most judicious friends (Scott for instance); at all events you must not throw away the number in existence, which we fear would be the case should you start a third time as No. I. At all issues consult Scott, and let him communicate with Blackwood, and to save yourself any further trouble let his decision be final.

Whether Mr Murray perceived the faint suspended sting of the Scorpion through those arguments, and the reassuring statement that in any case his own "innocence" could be fully established, we cannot

tell; but at all events he seems to have recovered his composure, and to have made no more remonstrances for the moment. We hold our breath to hear that there was ever a question of the Magazine losing the familiar name which has been a household word for so many years: but this is the only mention of such an idea that is to be found. We cannot imagine the possibility of Blackwood, who had stood like a rock against all assaults, and to whom perhaps Mr Murray's support was not so essential as was supposed in London, consenting to such a step: and Scott, we may be sure, would never have advised such an invasion of any man's rights. Murray, however, seems to have been satisfied. He was delighted with the Magazine for October 1818, the beginning of the second year, and there is a little bustle of activity in his next letter in respect to some contributors whom he believed he might be able to secure. Frere is mentioned, and Sir James Mackintosh, whom, however, he cannot ask at the moment on account of the attacks on the 'Edinburgh Review.' We imagine that his correspondents were not particularly anxious for his help in this way. They knew their own affairs and trusted their own men.

There is rather a comical incident here in the story, which shows that our two young persons, though perfectly capable of throwing dust in the eyes of the great London publisher, were only after all very young men still (for Wilson though over thirty was always a boy at heart), and not without a little characteristic silliness of their own. Amid the storm of literary missiles which flew about, a pamphlet of unusual virulence, called "Hypocrisy Unveiled and

Calumny Detected in a review of 'Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,'" was published, in which Murray was brought in as well as the rest. It appears that both he and Blackwood took this with equanimity, and resolved to take no notice of it; but Lockhart and Wilson both sent challenges to the anonymous writer through the publishers. This was not so foolish or impossible a proceeding then as it would be now, and it was not, unfortunately, Lockhart's only experience of this kind; but it was sufficiently absurd even in those days, and especially from men who had themselves dealt blows about them on every side, besides being a complete and rash withdrawal of the veil of mystery of which both before and after they made so great a point. The matter is referred to in a letter addressed to Mr Murray by Lockhart, who begins by expressing the great pleasure given him by a letter just shown to him by Blackwood, in which Murray's satisfaction with the number for October 1818 is fully expressed. "Depend upon it, the succeeding ones will have more of what you like and less of what you dislike in it," he says. And he adds:—

Lockhart to John Murray.

I speak as if nothing had happened; and, after all, I myself consider this vile pamphlet as nothing. Wilson has been a good deal distressed about it, however; and we have, both by writing to the Anonyme and by every other way in our power, done our best to discover the writer. We trust in God he may be *déterré.* My own suspicions rest on Graham (a poor creature you can know nothing about), but Master Constable must have furnished the information, and Master Pringle has played the scoundrel to Wilson. . . . The foolish abuse of your personal behaviour, in this pamphlet, cannot of course at all trouble you for more than a single moment.

The young men forgot how eagerly Messrs Hunt and Hazlitt had endeavoured to *déterrer* themselves, which was foolish: but they were young, and not examples of wisdom. There is a long letter from Mr Murray, published in his memoir, on this subject, part of which I may quote. He evidently writes in much impatience and annoyance; but his advice is scarcely so virtuous in its character as usual:—

John Murray to W. Blackwood.

I really can recollect no parallel to the palpable absurdity of your two friends. They have actually given up themselves as the authors of the offences charged upon them, by implication only, in the pamphlet. How they could possibly conceive that the writer of the pamphlet would be such an idiot as to quit his stronghold of concealment and allow his head to be chopped off by exposure, I am at a loss to conceive. Their only course was to have affected, and indeed to have felt, the most perfect indifference, and to have laughed at the rage which dictated so much scurrility; slyly watching to discover the author, whom, without appearing to know as such, they could have annoyed in every possible way.

We think, on the whole, we prefer the way of Lockhart and Wilson, even though it was silly, to Mr Murray's method; but he was much irritated, as was natural, and, after an indignant protest, expressed in the strongest terms, of injury on his own account, he adds, "I declare to God, that had I known what I had so incautiously engaged in, I would not have undertaken what I have done, or have suffered what I have in my feelings and character, which no man had hitherto the slightest cause for assailing: I would not have done so for any sum." But he ends off amicably enough with excellent advice as

to the future. Both parties, indeed, console the other under the offence, which both resent hotly for themselves. "Of course it cannot trouble you for more than a single moment," say the young men.

But [adds Mr Murray, with a valorous impulse], being in, I am determined to go through with you; and, if our friends will only act with redoubled discretion, we may get the better of this check and yet gain a victory. They should by a masterly effort pluck the thing out of their minds. The only course to be taken now, is to redouble every effort for the improvement of the Magazine. Let us take public estimation by assault: by the irresistible effect of talent employed on subjects that are interesting: and, above all, I say to collect information on passing events. Our editors are totally mistaken in thinking that this consists in laborious essays. These are very good as accessories, but the flesh and blood and bones is information. That will make the public eager to get us at the end of every month.

It is a curious instance of the injustice which is never more apparent than in the sweep of popular opinion, that the "laborious essays," of which Mr Murray was so contemptuous, included among others the fine criticisms and noble defence by which, more than anything else except his own merits, the fame of Wordsworth was secured. Jeffrey has been twitted to the most tedious extent with his "This will never do"; but Wilson has got but little credit for the first worthy appreciation of the Poet of the mountains. It is a little difficult to know what was the "information" for which the public was supposed to be so eager. Fortunately in this respect it was the men of letters who were in the right, and not the anxious man of business, who probably knew his own affairs

better than he did theirs, which is a thing that even the wisest are slow to perceive.

After this, however, the union was not too cordial between Edinburgh and London. A good deal of troubled correspondence went on, Mr Murray a little fretful and anxious for his own spotless reputation, while Mr Blackwood and his merry men, who were always more or less unruly, apologised or sometimes laughed a little in their sleeve, satisfied with the sweep of their own going, and not to be controlled. In January 1819, however, matters came to a crisis. Murray's name disappeared from the Magazine, and the bond was broken.

I find a curious letter in the course of the same year from Mr Murray to Mr Thomas Blackwood, who would seem to have sent him a note for £1000, apparently in reply to some complaints as to the delay of business settlements, that being the exact sum which he had invested in the Magazine. Murray returned the note, with a declaration that he wanted no payment or security for payment which was not in the usual way of business, but adding a somewhat querulous list of complaints against his former partner.

J. Murray to Thomas Blackwood.

When your brother was in London on the occasion of my secession from his Magazine, we agreed that this circumstance was to make no alteration in the understanding on which our other transactions had been hitherto conducted. Since which he has not performed his part of a written agreement respecting the Magazine: he refused to SELL one[1] of the works which I sent to him; he has not sent his publications, or made the offer

[1] Don Juan: humorous explanation of the same afterwards given, p. 380.

of them to me as heretofore, although he has received every work that I have published, in the true spirit of the understanding in which we parted. In fact, it is he who has withdrawn his business and agency from me.

I am fully sensible of the fairness of your judgment and of the correctness of your feelings; and to these I can in safety appeal, if you will abstract yourself from other considerations and will ask this broad question, Whether that man can be wholly in the wrong, or can have entertained any bad feeling towards your brother, who has for more than ten years poured into his business all the credit and advantages of a series of the most respectable and fortunate publications that have appeared? What these advantages must have been, you may form some estimate of when I say that the agency of such a book as 'Marriage' produces £50 in the course of a year; and such, I think, no man of business can deny to be an object of attention. In fact, we have never had any dispute before the appearance of a Magazine which has involved every one connected with it in alternate anxiety, disgrace, and misery.

From this point the fateful periodical which was to make Blackwood's name and his fortune was subject, even in the smallest share, to no stranger's control. Henceforward, anxious but indomitable, holding in his Pegasus as well as he could, sometimes permitting himself to be run away with, sometimes pulling up hard with a great effort, but always steady as a rock to his engagements, his opinions, and his friends, William Blackwood stood alone to take all the risks and fight all the battles. And that his life was full of agitation, and the struggle a hard one, there can be no doubt.

To show what he had to undergo we take up with a thrill of sympathy, which nowadays cannot but be mixed with amusement, three letters, all by the hands most renowned in Edinburgh, and representing the *élite* of the literary world, the last of the former gen-

eration, more lordly, more formal, than the present, which had once held the northern capital in fee. Mr Henry Mackenzie, the Man of Feeling, the author of 'Julia de Roubigné,' a work which our grandfathers believed to be equal to Rousseau, the most perfect Man of Letters perhaps left in the land, hitherto a friend and patron of Blackwood, and consulted by him on many literary subjects, is the author of the first of these letters:—

Henry Mackenzie to W. Blackwood.

HERIOT ROW, *Tuesday*, 31*st March* 1818.

It is with regret that Mr Mackenzie finds himself obliged to return the enclosed Magazine, which contains several good articles, but mixed with some things so offensive that he would not wish it to be found lying on his table. In taking leave of its publisher and editor he cannot avoid warning them (and he is sure "with a friendly voice") to abstain from personal detraction, which may perhaps gratify or amuse a small proportion of frivolous or ill-natured readers, but will certainly disgust that more respectable class from whose good opinion only solid and lasting reputation can be acquired.

The second is from Mr Patrick Fraser-Tytler, the historian, another great local potentate, and is still more tremendous in disapproval, and splendid in pomp of virtue:—

Patrick Fraser-Tytler to W. Blackwood.

PRINCES STREET, 24*th March* 1818.

When I lately saw you I had only glanced over your last number. I have since had leisure to read some part of it, more especially your prefatory poetical Address to Correspondents, and I must say I have done so both with pain and disappointment.

When you first commenced your literary journal you consulted me on the subject, and I told you that I thought there was an excellent opening for a periodical work of that nature,

provided it was well conducted. Under these ideas I was by no means unwilling now and then to send you any literary trifle that was lying by me, and altho' I never intended to become either to yours or to any other periodical a regular contributor, yet I should have been really happy to have seen your new attempt go on well. It seems, however, that to gratify the public taste, for I cannot think that these severities can be personally gratifying either to yourself or to your Editor, you are compelled to fill your pages with personal attacks, and by these means, relying upon the ill-nature of the world, to promote the sale of your journal. . . . What object you propose to yourself in giving unnecessary pain, and exposing to undeserved ridicule any set of respectable men, such as I conceive your fellow-booksellers to be, or to what purpose you have attacked the quiet and inoffensive authors who have no desire to contaminate the public morals, and no ability to vitiate the public taste, but who find an innocent amusement in writing poor works, and are already unhappy because nobody reads them, I cannot possibly understand. It may be this *does* increase your sale; yet I must look upon that gain as loss which is purchased by such mercenary criticism. . . . It is on this account and for these reasons that I must request you never to apply to me for any further article in your journal; for however unable it might be to stand beside many I have read there in point of ability, I should be ashamed to give any countenance, how trifling soever, to such gross and personal attacks as you have not scrupled to publish. You will have the goodness also to direct your clerk not to send any future number to me.

Poor Mr Blackwood! Probably he did not see anything at all funny in this solemn denunciation of the "mercenary criticism," which cost him a good deal of honest money out of his pocket, and so many dignified scoldings and advices. But no doubt the young men laughed to all the echoes, and were delighted with the pompous disapproval of the elders, who, when they oped their mouths, felt that no dog

should bark. The cause of all this indignation was simple enough. It was a rhymed example of those Notices to Correspondents which we read now, occasionally with amusement, in so many papers, and which had been, from the 'Spectator's' day, a handy medium for a little poke of fun or satire. It is not much more than doggerel, though clever doggerel, and did not even form part of the Magazine, being prefixed something in the fashion of an advertisement. To take it seriously seems the most amusing circumstance of all. But we cannot think it was amusing to Blackwood, whatever the young lions might think. Still more hard upon him was the following, the first of these great cannonadings, and from his own particular creation as a successful author, Dr M'Crie. It is dated January 5, 1818:—

Dr Thomas M'Crie to W. Blackwood.

I find it necessary to explain myself to you on a subject to which you have repeatedly adverted of late in conversation, my continuing to contribute to your Magazine. This I would have done sooner, but I wished to deliberate before deciding; and even after coming to a resolution I felt unpleasant in communicating it. You will readily anticipate from this what I am about to say, that I do not feel myself at liberty to be considered as a contributor to the work. My determination does not turn upon the Chaldee Manuscript, which has made so much noise. You know that I disapproved it, and are in possession of my reasons. But I looked, and still look, upon it as a single fault, which there was no reason to fear should be repeated. . . . My objections rest on the papers relating to religion which have made their appearance of late. It is evident to me from these that it is the design of the conductors to make religion a subject of discussion; and the sentiments brought forward and the feelings recommended are so utterly repugnant to mine, that I choose neither to implicate

myself in a tacit approbation of them by contributing to the work in which they hold so prominent a place, nor to involve myself in a dispute by contradicting them in the manner in which otherwise I would think it my duty to do.

This was almost the unkindest cut of all; for the opinions of the Magazine were always strictly orthodox, and Wilson and Lockhart were both of the mind to make up for a little profanity in secular affairs by the profoundest reverence in things sacred. Indeed, the lawsuit which presently brought a little more excitement into the affairs of the Magazine (which never had been wanting in animation) was founded on an assault upon Professor John Leslie, Professor of Natural History in the University of Edinburgh, for various offences against religious teaching, and chiefly for his description of the language in which the Bible was written as "the poorest and rudest in the world." This certainly "did not in Cæsar seem" irreligious; but it would appear that Dr M'Crie objected to any discussions of religion, even from the safer side, in the pages of a Magazine. This combination of missiles rushing through the air at Blackwood's head from quarters so different gives a very clear idea of what our excellent founder had to suffer. It was a little hard to be hectored on the subject with the severe questions, "What do you propose to yourself?" and that chiefly for the sins of others. But he stood fast, with a steady firmness, and never flinched, always able to defend himself, yet saying no more than was necessary, paying his money heroically, and biding his time.

While thus quoting the assailants, let us add a quite unexpected and flattering note of applause from

a very different quarter. It has the stamp of the Institut de France, Académie royale des Sciences, with the head of Pallas in full splendour:—

PARIS, *le cinq février* 1818.

Le Secrétaire perpétuel de l'Académie.

MONSIEUR,—L'Académie royale des Sciences a reçu les cahiers d'Octobre et de Novembre de votre 'Blackwood's Magazine' que vous avez eu la bonté de lui envoyer et qui lui ont été remis de votre part, par M. Biot à son retour d'Angleterre.

Votre nom était déjà bien connu de l'Institut, par l'Encyclopédie de M. Brewster qui a enriché sa Bibliothèque. Le succès mérité de votre journal des articles curieux et piquans dont il est composé sont faits pour intéresser les littérateurs de toutes les nations qui ne seront pas arrêtés par la nécessité de se familiariser avec un idiome moins généralement répandu: cette difficulté même sera un attrait de plus qui doit vous assurer un grand nombre de lecteurs par l'occasion qu'elle les fournise de se livrés à une étude, à laquelle ils n'auraient peut-être songé d'eux-mêmes.

Recevez donc, monsieur, les remerciemens que l'Académie me charge de vous faire en son nom, et en celui de tout l'Institut de France.—J'ai l'honneur d'être, avec la plus haute considération, monsieur, votre très humble et obéissant serviteur,

DELAMBRE.

Let us hope that Mr Blackwood found balm from the blows of his friends in this foreign testimonial. Was the "idiome moins généralement répandu" the Scots accent—the Doric, as it was fondly called, which all those Scots writers half-proudly, half-shamefacedly, pled guilty to?

The Leslie trial was not till the year 1822, and was the last of those events. It was so much more innocent than the Dalyell business that the article

on which it was founded contained no personal mockery like that poured on the head of the latter unfortunate person. "Going out of his path to recommend an impious work," casting "an ignorant sarcasm on the language of the Bible," being "an object of suspicion to those who hold the Scriptures in honour,"—these were the libels upon which the action was brought. Also that the sufferer had been called an *Enfant perdu* (triumphantly proved from the French dictionary to mean only Skirmisher). The injured person claimed £5000 damages for his wounded reputation. The jury gave him £100. Such a case could not, we imagine, stand for a moment nowadays, or else Biblical critics must have lost many a chance of salving their injured feelings. But small as the damages were, the defence in such a case is never uncostly; and this substantial loss was added to the many other troubles of the Magazine during the first stormy ten years of its life. This is now the mythic period, the heroic age of its history. The rights and the wrongs, once so fiercely contending, have died away into silence. Youth plays the same or very similar pranks around us at the present time in many papers and magazines; but we miss the boyish laughter, the redeeming element of fun, which was in so much of it. The young critics of 'Blackwood,' in the exuberance of their mischievous fancy, had not the portentous gravity which is so general now.

CHAPTER V.

JOHN GIBSON LOCKHART.

HIS UNIQUE PERSONALITY—EARLY FRIENDSHIP WITH WILSON—STUDIES IN GERMANY ON FUNDS FURNISHED BY BLACKWOOD—MAKES THE ACQUAINTANCE OF GOETHE—HIS EXERTIONS ON BEHALF OF THE MAGAZINE—"THE SCORPION WHICH DELIGHTETH TO STING THE FACES OF MEN"—A VERY PROTEUS OF LITERARY CAPACITY—HIS SHARE IN THE 'NOCTES'—FIRST MEETING WITH SCOTT—AT ABBOTSFORD—'PETER'S LETTERS TO HIS KINSFOLK'—THE SCOTT-CHRISTIE DUEL—ACCEPTS THE EDITORSHIP OF THE 'QUARTERLY REVIEW'—LETTERS AND CONTRIBUTIONS FROM LONDON—COLLABORATES WITH MAGINN—LAST LETTER AND CONTRIBUTION TO MAGA.

AMONG the younger men who gathered about Mr Blackwood—first on the South Bridge, and afterwards in his more aristocratic quarters in Princes Street—there was none more remarkable than John Gibson Lockhart, of whom and of whose doings the reader already knows so much. There are many of his letters in the Blackwood collection, but amid all the packets of them which are before me scarcely one has a date. They are written on "Friday morning," or on the 20th, say, of some month, sometimes named "October," "January," sometimes not; the year never. The subjects of them are almost invariably articles in the Magazine, but even these indicated with such a flying hand, things already half talked over by word

of mouth, that it would require the minutest research to identify exactly what they are about. This produces a wealth, yet at the same time a poverty—or rather, a sense of wealth in the midst of actual poverty—which is exceedingly tantalising to the biographer. He seems to be told so much, yet knows so little; learning a great deal of the man, but very little about him; a glimpse at his inner self, but nothing at all of the outside. We shall do our best to put before the reader this very active member of the brotherhood—the one whose exertions had the greatest influence upon the new Magazine, the most romantic and picturesque figure among them, notwithstanding the Jove-like presence of Wilson, who was not by any means so unusual a type, in his big, magnificent fairness and size, as the darker, slimmer figure standing by him—all energy and darting wit on one side, all kindness and tender domestic feeling on the other; fastidious, keen, refined, yet quite capable of picking up the coarsest missile, and flinging it with a sudden impulse hotter and swifter than anything the ruddy Berserker was capable of. Men like Wilson are to be found everywhere in Scotland, if seldom with his endowment of genius. Men like Lockhart are very rare anywhere.[1]

He was born in 1794, and was consequently just twenty-three when 'Blackwood's Magazine' began its career,—the most irresponsible age, not yet free of the traditions of boyhood, yet formally endued with the

[1] Though some advantage has been taken in revision, this sketch was written before the author had an opportunity of seeing the much longer and more elaborate work upon Lockhart of Mr Andrew Lang: whose book, so far as its subject himself goes, is admirable, though its tone in respect to the Magazine is naturally to us very objectionable.

independence of the man. He was, we may premise, ten years younger than Wilson, whom we class with him as if they were of the same age: but Wilson was always a boy, which was not Lockhart's case. He was the son of a much-respected Scotch minister holding at that time a charge in Glasgow. His father was of the class called squarson in England—half laird, half minister—though he did not succeed to the lairdship till the end of his life,—a class not so much represented in the Church of Scotland nowadays as at that time: and the son was thus a Lockhart of a well-known family, "come of kent folk,"—an advantage always of the greatest importance both to a man's character and his fortune. He was educated at Glasgow University, and went thereafter, as so many of the best scholars of Glasgow do, by means of the Snell Scholarship, to Balliol, Oxford, which was not then, perhaps, so distinguished a college as it is now. But the Snell scholar has almost always been distinguished, and every generation of them has produced notable members, to the embellishment of their second home of learning, and the great honour and glory of the first. There is a curious story told in this beginning of his career, which is highly characteristic of him and of his after-ways. On some occasion, unidentified, he sent in to his tutor an exercise, apparently in Hebrew, to the confusion but great admiration of the tutor, who carried this learned production to the Master, who presumably possessed some knowledge of that language. After some examination, and no doubt much puzzling, this recondite study turned out to be a piece of satire aimed at the unsuspecting tutor himself, in good English, written in Hebrew characters—Hebrew

forming part of the ordinary studies in Glasgow of theological students, from whom this daring young joker had no doubt picked up a knowledge of the characters. Dons are not good people generally to joke with, but it would seem that no particular harm came of this mystification. On leaving Oxford, which he did at a very early age, he came to Edinburgh to study law, and was duly called to the bar in 1816, and began with other young men those fruitless perambulations of the Parliament House which have wearied out so many aspirants, and sent them off into the paths of literature and others as precarious. Here, with the instinctive forgathering of like to like, he made close friends with John Wilson, a young man only like him in the fine fantastic distinction of genius, which naturally nobody knew of in these days, and in the external circumstances of life. Wilson was of the *nouveaux riches*, not such a phalanx then as now. He had gone long before Lockhart's time as a gentleman-commoner to Magdalen, the most expensive thing to be done, of which the Snell Scholar would no doubt be scornful. But the instincts of youth ignore such distinctions, and Wilson's university record was also brilliant. They became inseparable, the one stirring up the other to all kinds of glorious designs. Wilson was already a poet, author of the "Isle of Palms" and various other copies of verses, of which his companion probably thought nothing, and he himself not much. It is curious, however, that by right of this production Wilson continued for many years to be named at the tail of the so-called Lake poets as one of their school.

These two young men soon acquired a daily habit

of dropping into Blackwood's establishment in Princes Street, of which one of them a few years later gave a delightful description in 'Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk':—

> You have an oval saloon lighted from the roof, where various groups of loungers and *dilettanti* are engaged in looking at or criticising among themselves the publications just arrived by that day's post from town. In such critical colloquies the voice of the bookseller may ever and anon be heard mingling the broad and unadulterated tones of its Auld Reekie music; for unless occupied in the recesses of his premises with some other business, it is here that he has his usual station. He is a nimble, active-looking man of middle age, and moves about from one corner to another with great alacrity, and apparently under the influence of high animal spirits. His complexion is very sanguineous, but nothing could be more intelligent, keen, and sagacious than the expression of his whole physiognomy; above all the grey eyes and eyebrows, as full of locomotion as those of Catalani.

The young man who, when he had become a literary personage by the agency of the Magazine, wrote the above, had the best of reasons for appreciating the generous publisher who began to influence his life from his very first appearance in Edinburgh. Lockhart was a linguist, an elegant accomplishment rather than a necessity of education in his day; and knew German, then only beginning to come into favour as a storehouse of literature: and it was his eager desire to go to Germany to complete his knowledge, and with the view of translating something by way of paying his expenses. Mr Blackwood evidently from the first had believed in the youth, and it was he who furnished the funds for the journey. He lent, or it would be more true to say gave, a sum which, we

believe, was at least "£300 or perhaps more," to the young literary adventurer, for which he received a translation of Schlegel's Lectures on the History of Literature. The book seems to have done well enough, and many years later, when its author was well known, came to a second edition; but this act of liberality and confidence must have been a powerful retaining fee.

Wilson had no such bond to the publisher's service; but he was eager for work, and ready for any adventure.

They both began to help a little in the original series of the 'Edinburgh Monthly Magazine,' as edited by Pringle and Cleghorn; and no doubt it was partly their brilliant talk and literary ambition, and eager desire to find a fit medium of expression for the opinions and ideas with which their minds were overflowing, and especially for that "criticism of life" which, whether in poetry or in prose, it is the first mission and yearning of the young writer to get into print, that sustained and inspired Mr Blackwood in his determination to take the periodical, of which he, still more than the young men, saw the possibilities, out of the incapable hands which were conducting it into pure mediocrity.

The question whether there was or was not an Editor, or rather a couple of Editors, to the new series, in succession to the old, is one that has been very much disputed. I do not think that the reader, after the glimpses into the Blackwood correspondence which I have been able to give, can have much doubt that the Magazine was, as I have before said, in commission, the committee of three occupying intermit-

tently the supreme chair—one number sometimes in one man's charge, sometimes in another's, now one judgment uppermost and now another, but the veto always in Blackwood's hands, even in the few months when the influence of Murray made itself felt, and bound down a very independent and high-spirited group of men to an unwilling and rare compliance with rule and formula which was quite against their nature. A few letters from Lockhart addressed to a "Welsh clergyman of the name of Williams," who was, I am told, the brother of Archdeacon Williams, afterwards for a number of years headmaster of the Edinburgh Academy, were printed in several numbers of the 'London Scotsman'—an extinct paper—in May 1868, and throw a great deal of light upon the situation. The first is in the usual tone employed by all the members of the triumvirate to possible contributors, frank and even eager acceptance of proposed articles from everybody supposed to possess talent or learning (especially the latter, on which the two Oxford men were strong, evidently troubled by the absence of scholarship which they found in Edinburgh on their return thither)—which enthusiasm of welcome, however, did not hinder, or even modify, the relentless rejection of such articles when not approved. Lockhart informs his Welsh friend that the articles he proposes are "exactly of the kind most wanted by Blackwood: for we can get enough of jokes and criticisms—to be sure far from the best in their way sometimes: but in this country-town of ours, which you are pleased to call by a fairer name than it deserves, by far the greatest rarities are *information* worthy of being so called and learning *of any kind.*"

There is a frankness about the following description of the Magazine in question, No. I. of the new series — the number for October 1817 — which is quite unlike anything else which we have heard on the subject:—

J. G. Lockhart to Rev. Mr Williams.

25 Maitland Street, Edinburgh,
February 21, 1818.

The two papers you mention as having particularly pleased you are the work of two very different persons, the first, "Dandy Dinmont," being mine, and the "Depravity of Animals"—certainly one of the best pieces of grave burlesque since Swift—Walter Scott's. W. Scott is much interested in Blackwood and his Magazine, and has communicated something to each of the last five numbers. So has old Mackenzie, the "Man of Feeling," but I must say his day has gone by; so have Dr G. D. Clarke, Thomson the chemist, Jameson the mineralogist, D. Brewster, J. Wilson Croker (bad), so that you have at least some good names to support you, though I confess that, chiefly owing to the insertion of a rash *jeu d'esprit* in the number you have seen, the chief burden since October has fallen on Wilson and myself. Wilson must have been your contemporary at Oxford: you are no stranger to his genius.

I know you are a Whig, but you are not a Democratical one, therefore all good Britons must in main points agree with you. Christianity is a subject which you know none but boys and fools will make light of in print, therefore I am sure that anything John could write would of course do. But, I confess, if you like to write on politics, I hope you will write something off the line of the 'Edinburgh Review'; for admirable as it is, I think it is now a little stale—still more off the line of the blundering and bigoted pedantry of the 'Quarterly' and its crew. I am sure you loathe Croker and Southey's politics as much as myself.

The truth is that no subject can come wrong to you, but I really know not what particular bent your studies have taken. If you have plunged deep into the higher philosophy, and could

write on these subjects, you would supply our greatest vacuum. If you have, as I suspect, studied British history more, and more deeply than most men, surely there could be no field more glorious than this. A little liberal classical criticism comes to us like a delightful stranger from a more happy land, and I know you can command this pleasure for us without any trouble to yourself. In the notice prefixed to No. 7 of the Magazine occur names of various articles. Such of them as have not since appeared do not exist, and may be called into being by you as well as by any other. After all we have had about Burns, a letter from you would still be most acceptable. An account of the plans for a seminary of education in Wales would be equally so, as some talk has lately been going on both here and in Liverpool in regard to educational schemes. Did I not formerly mention a paper on the probable reception Prince Charles would have met with in Wales? *N.B.*—A little memoir of Colonel Johnes, with some account of his library, an account of the state of religion in your country, &c., &c. A little theology would be capital. The Scots divines are very ignorant. I hope, then, that "Cambria" will not be the only thing of yours in the next number. Blackwood publishes on the 20th here, but your parcel may be in good time if you send it off immediately on receipt of this. If you have any curiosity, I will send you an index of authors to the different numbers of the Magazine since October.

We begin to hope that Hunt won't prosecute.

This, perhaps, is the only letter of Lockhart's extant that can be called boyish. His eagerness to confide all the secrets of the Magazine to his Welsh friend, though so strongly against the principles of the brotherhood, his still greater eagerness to intrust him with any subject under heaven, looks more like the delight of sudden and precocious power, and a rapturous sense of his own position as the very opener of the gates of Fame and Fortune, than anything else that ever appears—at least in the aspect of him which

we are accustomed to. It is sad to think that the man to whom he offered so many openings — from Burns to the Welsh Seminary, which it is interesting to hear was thought of so long ago—from philosophy, classics, and the state of religion, down to an account of Colonel Johnes' library—does not make any continuous appearance in the records of Blackwood: neither he nor "John," who was the future Archdeacon himself, responding as appears to this large and liberal call. The second letter of the series proves that his correspondent did something in this earlier period of 'Maga's' career:—

J. G. Lockhart to Mr Williams.

25 Maitland Street, Edinburgh,
July 8, 1818.

Your letter and the packet to Mr Blackwood arrived to-day. How long they have been on their travels God only knows, for you have affixed no date to either of them. Although the history of the Minstrel of Bruges is very amusing, I think your Triads are more so, and look better at the beginning of a series; so they appear this month under the title of "Horæ Cambricæ," No. 1. Next month follows the life of your hero as No. 2, and I hope there is no fear of the series being a short one. I regret extremely that Ebony's vile sloth has caused the delay of the Magazine, but I trust it will reach you as soon as this letter, and henceforth every letter shall pass regularly to you by a few days after the 1st of each month. May none arrive to which you can say, Τε *μοι καὶ σοι.*

I had some days ago a very good and pretty long letter from John, in which he favoured me with a narrative of the row in Winchester College, and with some bitter epithets against the propriety of attacking such a character as Mr Examiner Hunt. Even my high opinion of my friend's sagacity is insufficient to make me enter into or sympathise with any feelings of respect for such a conceited, coxcombical incendiary. But——dangerous ground.

Should you visit the North in the summer, I fear you would not find much to amuse you in the way of society here; but in the winter I imagine few places can be more abundant in good society—the best I have ever seen, because it is so thoroughly mingled—*i.e.*, there are not enough of different sorts of people to make different circles as in London, and they all move together very amicably and agreeably—Peers, Lairds, Advocates, Reviewers, Poets, &c. It is very amusing certainly, and worth coming to taste, at all events for once. With the high men of letters here I have very slight acquaintance; indeed I do not admire any of them much except Scott, and he is an exception to what I have said, for he has been very kind to me often, and I spend many hours every week in his house. I shall mention to you what I do not to any one here: that he has asked me to write for him the history of the 'Edinburgh Annual Register,' the allowance for which is £500 per annum, and I have accepted his offer. This is done *sub rosa*, the booksellers knowing nothing of it. I fancy his novels occupy him so much that he really could not proceed with it any longer. The years '16 and '17 are both to be done, so I have work enough on hand; but I mean to finish both within a year, which will be £1000 in my pocket, and afterwards I think the business may be managed without very much labour.

Blackwood, I rejoice to say, flourishes mightily; his sale increases vastly every month, and he is praised everywhere.

The third of these letters, in some respects the most interesting of the three, throws a curious new light upon the circumstances, and discloses the short-lived arrangement which existed through a few numbers only:—

J. G. Lockhart to Mr Williams.

If you have seen No. 7 of 'Blackwood's Magazine' you will have perceived that he has now got a partner in the concern who, it is supposed, may have it in his power vastly to improve it. Murray had a scheme, you recollect, of setting up a Magazine of his own some time ago. He printed 12,000 of the first number, but lost heart and never published. Barrow

of the Admiralty was to be the editor, but he is sadly deficient in the Literæ Humaniores, and has never read anything but geography. Murray and Blackwood, however, may now do much in unison.

The two bibliopoles have offered John Wilson and myself £500 a-year between us to conduct their Magazine, and to pay us and our friends at the handsomest rate they can afford per sheet for what we write. This agreement we have made for one year, at the end of which we expect the work will be established, so as to afford better things. They at present print 6000, and expect soon to sell that number regularly.

Our only object is to make the book a good one: to this you can much contribute, and I trust you will do so, and you shall be paid for your trouble. Of the last Welsh pieces you have sent, I am afraid most are too strictly antiquarian, and locally so, for the Magazine readers in their present uninitiated state. Do give us some things more in the fashion of the Tale of Ivan, more intelligible to all to begin with. Mr Merivale, author of 'Orlando in Roncesvalles,' who was a friend of Mr Johnes, and may therefore be known to you, has agreed to write a good deal, and I think his knowledge of old French and Italian books may render him a most valuable hand. . . . It strikes me that a most amusing series of papers might be given on the Fathers, translating and commenting on those rare views of society and manners, and also those specimens of eloquence which are lost to the world in that mass of unread folios. Would you undertake this? I suppose you have, or could easily procure, copies of the most important, and I really conceive you might furnish us with a most valuable body of entertaining as well as instructive matter. Think of this: you will perceive very soon a change, I hope much for the better, in the contents of the Magazine. Whatever you can do in the way of *curious information*, above all things, will be paid for handsomely and instantly, in case these should be matters of any moment in your eyes: for the longer one lives the more visible becomes the ubiquity of the reign of *Diva Pecunia.*

The statement in this letter of the absolute engagement of Lockhart and Wilson to edit the Magazine is

the sole trace existing, so far as I am aware, of any arrangement of the kind: and my instinctive idea on reading it was that it must have been a temporary plan of Murray's, who loved to do things formally and in order, and to whose ideas an editor would be as necessary for a Magazine as a handle to a door. I have ascertained since that this was precisely the fact. Murray's partnership with Blackwood lasted, however, as the reader has seen, for six months only, and this engagement produced nothing but the already quoted letter inserted in our last chapter from these two responsible (though so completely irresponsible) persons, whom Blackwood calls "our friends," and who ran wilder riot than ever, as far as they could, while in their temporary authority. They never got the money, I am told, thus promised—(at all events both denied strenuously in after life having ever received a penny for editorial work)—and I do not think that even for these six months they were ever free from the silent authority behind backs, who indeed permitted a great deal to their audacity, but not all.

Lockhart's proposal that his correspondent should make amusing papers on the Fathers, and their rare views of society and manners, is a wonderful suggestion; and the idea of the Welsh divine searching for fun and frolic in the pages of the 'Acta Sanctorum,' of which he could easily procure copies, is more amusing and original than we fear the papers would have been. Our young man is never elsewhere so young, so elated, or so important as in this curious scrap of correspondence. I am sorry there is no more of it.

They were idle young men, and, according to all the usual estimates, it was a rash thing to depend upon them and their flighty exertions for the success of a grave undertaking; but Blackwood had a keen eye for character, and divined his men more justly than their fellows: besides, he had the very exceptional gift of influencing and guiding the unruly Pegasus, which probably would not have gone soberly in harness for any other man. They treated him sometimes a little cavalierly, from that *de haut en bas* of education and conscious genius on which the Oxford scholar, freshly issued from the mint of intellectual superiority, is apt to feel himself elevated, looking down upon the general world; but they acknowledged his power with more or less cordiality, laughing at it sometimes and taking it as a good joke, at other times straining against the curb, but on the whole recognising the guidance with sufficiently good grace, notwithstanding their self-will and the impetuosity of their natures. It would scarcely seem to have been suspected by others that such coadjutors were really and seriously to be trusted for steady work. "They were so constantly employed," says Mr R. P. Gillies—himself afterwards a member of the Blackwood band—in his 'Recollections of a Literary Veteran,' "in giggling and making giggle, like Cowper and Thurlow in another generation, that they seemed to have no time for work." Lockhart, besides being the greatest wit, was the caricaturist of the gay party: no one was safe from him, specially not himself, of whom he made prim sketches, in all the stiffness of correct demeanour which veiled his wild and headlong fancy. All the Edinburgh notabilities

came under the very sharp pen of the reckless artist —the judge on the bench and the preacher in the pulpit. I find, however, a pen-and-ink sketch of a head, which I suppose to be that of Mr Blackwood, among these dusty papers, not satirical at all, as like as possible to the literary portrait which has just been quoted. Lockhart was himself a handsome young fellow, dark and brilliant, a little reserved in manner, very shy! with a winning air of half-melancholy, unobtrusive, well-mannered in society. There is something curious in the contrast between the external description thus given of him, and the reputation which he soon acquired of reckless indifference to the feelings of others, and a bitterness of wit which was tempered by no regard for his neighbour. "The Scorpion which delighteth to sting the faces of men" was no undeserved nickname, but seems to describe his peculiar character with considerable insight. Was it his own? We are disposed to suspect it was.

He was not a swashbuckler like Wilson, making his sword whistle round his head, and cutting men down on every side. His satire was mischievous, virulent, not so much from hate as from nature. It was as if he had a physical necessity for discharging that point of venom, which he emitted suddenly without warning, without passion or excitement, proceeding on his way gaily with perfect unconcern when the dart was flung. It is impossible to imagine anything more unlike the roaring choruses of conviviality which were supposed to distinguish Ambrose's than this reticent, sensitive, attractive, yet dangerous youth, by whose charm such a giant as Scott was immedi-

ately subjugated, and who slew his victims mostly by the midnight oil, not by any blaze of gaiety, or in the accumulative fervour of social sarcasm. From him came the most of those sharp things which the victims could not forget. Wilson hacked about him, distributing blows right and left, delivered sometimes for fun, though sometimes with the most extraordinary impulse of perversity, in the impetus of his career. Lockhart put in his sting in a moment, inveterate; instantaneous, with the effect of a barbed dart—yet almost, as it seemed, with the mere intention of giving point to his sentences, and no particular feeling at all.

He was, like the others—like most of the notable young men in Edinburgh in their several generations—a briefless barrister, an advocate without clients. It is said that, though he could write with such force, he was incapable of public speaking, and therefore could not have succeeded as a pleader before law courts, under any circumstances. He was, as we have noted, a linguist—an accomplishment much more rare then than now, though even now it is not too common. He was capable of incursions into that dark German sphere, of which in those days the world in general knew so little, had encountered and been noticed by Goethe, and was sufficiently familiar with local colour and phraseology to report the opinions of apocryphal German professors, giving perhaps a suggestion to Thomas Carlyle, whose Teufelsdröckh was indeed of a very different order from Lockhart's Dr Ulrich Sternstare or Baron von Lauerwinkel, but who might have caught the idea from his predecessor. Lockhart was also one of the first modern translators and expositors of Spanish literature, which was a

more elegant language, and one more romantic and gentlemanlike, according to the fancy of the time. He was indeed a very Proteus of literary capacity, and could disport himself within the covers of one Magazine under half-a-dozen different characters. His wonderful powers of work have already been remarked. He idled or seemed to idle through the day, absorbed in the cheerful nothings of a young man's life in town, and probably went home late like the rest of his kind, but all the same had his sheet ready for the Magazine next morning. Nerves were happily unknown in those days. Men feared overwork as little as they feared writer's cramp, an exquisite malady which was almost epidemic a short while ago, but now seems happily to have died out of fashion again.

After the commotion of the immediate beginning, the new periodical went on with great vigour, asserting by all its mouths, for the satisfaction of Mr Murray and other fastidious persons, that the "personalities" had come to an end, and that henceforward its progress was to be virtuous beyond all the usual requirements of virtue. Murray dropped off, as we have seen, perhaps with but a limited confidence in those promises, perhaps for other reasons; but we can scarcely pretend that the personalities did cease. The Cockney School continued to be the object of unsparing attack, and other opponents arose, natural foes of the Tory band, natural rivals for the public approval. There was a raid against the 'Scotsman,' the well-known Edinburgh paper, which then was laying the foundations of its great popularity, and which being as Whig as Blackwood was Tory,

had violently attacked the Magazine. This, however, raised no great grievance or complaint, for in the unusual instances when "hawks" do "pike out hawks' een," the spectators are generally too thankful to see their arms turned against each other to interfere, and the newspaper was baited by the Magazine under the form of a mad bull, with lively illustrations and to the general delight. The Cockney School also replied at intervals, with much splutter of returning musketry from the 'Examiner' and other papers devoted to that school in London, and there were renewed threats of actions from Hunt and Hazlitt, from time to time, but no further harm done. I do not know by whom the idea of a series of papers, in which the affairs of the world, the characteristics of the party, and things in general, should be treated in the imaginary talk of a number of half-fictitious persons, was first conceived. It was, however, begun some time before the day of the 'Noctes,' whether tentatively or accidentally, by the record of a sort of literary picnic and expedition to the Kirk of Shotts, and by a further and more prolonged excursion, in which the members of the brotherhood, after their rambles or their sport, met in a Tent, and discussed over their toddy every subject in earth and heaven. The same idea, with a difference, had already been used in a series of letters, professedly by Timothy Tickler, which was the pseudonym of one of the older men of the brotherhood, Mr Robert Sym, the uncle of John Wilson, who afterwards became one of the most notable figures in the 'Noctes.' I do not imagine, however, that either the letters of Timothy or his after-utterances in the 'Noctes' were actually from his hand, though he had a small share

now and then, among the many who took part in the production of these amusing monologues or dialogues. Such light summer divertisements ended in the institution of the Evenings at Ambrose's, where, independent of wind or weather, the beauties of nature or the attractions of sport, a certain merry circle were supposed to assemble, and carry on the same discussions, with a continuity which made of the 'Noctes' one of the most admirable mediums for the "criticism of life" that was ever known—as well as, perhaps, the most popular and living series of periodical literary sketches ever given to the world.

There are few ideas in literature more attractive than that of the 'Noctes'—especially in that periodical literature which is never so powerful as when it can manage to prolong the interest of the reader from publication to publication, giving him as it were himself a part to play in the discussions which are there carried on. This continual commentary, putting public events and books, and all the undertakings of the period, to the test of reason or of imagination, discussing the people and the things of common life for us and with us, in the freedom of literary irresponsibility yet authority: or with the light and rapid survey of a still easier tribunal, at which the ludicrous side of life is the favourite aspect—has a never-failing charm. It is delightful for the writer and the reader alike, and when well done is the most effectual criticism that can be of the varied drama of existence which goes on around us, and is our chief interest. The writers of 'Blackwood's Magazine' added a new attraction to this lively review of life by producing themselves in their own differing individualities in

the foreground, a gay and reckless yet powerful band, wielding the flying pen in caricature of each other, in light-hearted personal sallies and attacks, in which each man had the power of instant retaliation upon his neighbour, and all went merry as marriage-bells. It was true that it was generally a Barmecide's feast at which these imaginary sittings were held, and the draughts of the giants therein recorded were the completest fiction; but as the lively manuscript passed from hand to hand, or two of the laughing critics laid their heads together over it, each man's sayings were probably more like him and true to nature than if the mirth of Ambrose's had been as noisy as they pretended it to be.

The letters of Lockhart which are to be found in the overflowing repositories of Blackwood are considerable in number, but they are extremely fragmentary and hasty in character. They give us a flying glimpse of the man in his overflowing energy and haste of youth, dashing off advice, direction, suggestion, as fast as his fingers can move over the paper, and with all the sharpness and decision of his age and character —without, however, penetrating into the inmost soul of him, or revealing much of his profounder nature. I have not, indeed, seen any of Lockhart's letters which do this. He was not introspective, according to the favourite jargon of our time. His age had scarcely begun to indulge in such terms, or to unrobe itself before the public. His letters to Blackwood are chiefly a series of illustrations of the work of the Magazine. They are the rapid billets interchanged by men who saw each other every day, or most days, and who spoke to each other as much by allusions

understood by both as by formal statements. They show better, however, than anything else could do the position of the curious little company, writers and publisher, and the very peculiar place held by Mr Blackwood among those hot-headed and high-spirited young men, who were occasionally rebellious, sometimes impertinent, now and then overbearing; but who one and all had an almost childlike confidence in his perfect friendship and well-meaning towards them, along with an almost invariable, though often unwilling and impatient, submission to his judgment. "The man clothed in plain apparel," plain too in all his pretensions, and even in the style, not literary or aiming at effect, but always forcible, sensible, and vigorous in expression, with which he replied—kept his place among them, steadily holding to his own view in face of all petulance and resistance, though always an enthusiast for literary excellence, and lavish in appreciation and praise.

These letters, as has been already said, are bewildering to the unfortunate historian, for they are absolutely without date; and as they were, it is to be supposed, generally delivered by hand, or sent in a parcel of books by the coach, there is not even the aid of a postmark to help us. It is very likely that their sequence as here given is not quite accurate. But the subject is continuous, and exact chronology is of the less importance that the 'Noctes' of which they treat began in 1822, and Lockhart's regular contributions ceased in 1829, thus identifying the period. They show the singular union and interchange between the chief contributors, every man's hand in every other man's dish — not generally a very safe

principle of procedure, but apparently answering perfectly well in the case of this sworn brotherhood, who, so far as is visible, had no serious quarrels among themselves, not any at least that came to the notice of the world, though they went on cutting up and adding to each other's manuscripts, as the following notes will show. They plunge us into the midst of the 'Noctes' without introduction or explanatory pause, laying the machinery of these most popular and attractive papers before us in a way which may be a surprise, and possibly a disappointment, to some readers who have been brought up in the traditions of fun and jollity which have always hung about the imaginary table at Ambrose's. It would not seem that these Symposia were under any regular system at first or subjected to any editorship. When they began it was frequently Lockhart who was the author, sometimes Maginn (after the advent of that still more unruly contributor): occasionally Hogg had, or was allowed to suppose that he had, a large share in them. Finally they fell into the hands of Wilson, and it is chiefly his portion of these admirable exchanges of literary criticism and comment which have been preserved and collected. To produce them required many gifts beyond these of the moralist or critic. A certain amount of creative skill and dramatic instinct, in addition to the flow of wit and power of analysis and analogy, was necessary to one who had to keep up a keen argument single-handed, like a Japanese juggler with his balls, especially when every man who was supposed to speak was a notable man, whose thoughts and diction could both be easily identified; or to carry out all the quips of a prolonged

jest, in which the tempers of some of the interlocutors were naturally roused, and free speaking was the rule: while, on the other hand, the number of subjects which had to be touched upon in a monthly commentary upon the doings of the world was very great. We are made to leap over a considerable number of early and agitated years, which, however, have already found a brief place in the record in following this interesting portion of the early productions of 'Maga.' The special series entitled 'Noctes,' after two or three preliminary series, as above indicated, began in 1822.

I give the following illustrations of the system, if system it can be called, in extracts from many letters, all short, and written with a flying pen. They are addressed to Mr Blackwood, sometimes with books, as we have said, and by the "Blucher," the coach from Melrose to Edinburgh, sometimes by the familiar hand of the printer's devil, sometimes scrawled in "the shop." The following scrap may possibly refer to the beginning of these famous papers, and would seem to prove that it was from Blackwood's brain that the conception came:—

Your idea of the 'Noctes' is most capital; but the thing must be done at leisure, and I rather think when Wilson and I are together. Meantime trust it to the Doctor, and let me have his hints. This would be the far best vehicle for discussing the Periodical Press. Never having seen Gifford, I could not do him very well. I think I could do "John Bull" and Jeffrey. Get hold of Theodore's old farces, that I may steal *his own puns.* Hogg told me he had been writing a 'Noctes.' Let me see it when it is in type, that I may put in a few cuts at himself. This lad Carne, who is he? I can't understand who or what he is. You should make him write a little book

or articles on Green. He is going to Westmoreland, and I have given him a note to Wilson, whom he will amuse.

The "lad Carne" had been introduced by Hogg, who brought him to Abbotsford, and also to Chiefswood, which was then Lockhart's home, with the freedom of the Shepherd's usual dealings with his friends. Lockhart complains that he had not been able to write at any length, being interrupted by these visitors. He writes on a "Sunday night," when he was something of an invalid, complaining of having been "confined one whole day, and part of another, to bed with this influenza":—

I enclose what I have been able to do. I have all but omitted Hogg, according to the Professor's request, leaving him to fill up that character as he pleases. I have said nothing that I should not like to see stand, nothing which he or you may not strike out if you please; but don't *dele* merely because a thing appears unintelligible or meaningless, for I know what I am doing, and am pretty sure of my hits. Hogg's song is very good, and if Cheape sends anything, Wilson will easily interweave that also.

It will cost you considerable trouble to see that this Tickler of shreds and patches appears properly. I have numbered the pages in red, and I have marked out with red marks the bits to be taken in from Maginn's MS. I cannot very well judge, but I think the two hands will scarcely be detected. You must send down the Review to the printers again.

I can't do anything to speak of in the 'Noctes' this month. I think Wilson's article on King Leigh quite *magnifique!* quite inimitable. He will feel the fun more than a ton of bitterness from the Doctor or me. My notion is that it should be a part of the 'Noctes' after Maginn's part in the little bit I have sent; then this lecture of the Professor's; then the other little bit of mine, and the song with which 'Maga' concludes. But if you don't like this, anyway you like. Don't mind about sending

the slips of the Chancery article. You can correct them yourself quite well. I shall therefore expect to have 'Maga' in my next parcel. . . .

The above was written with the intention of being sent on Monday, but I changed my mind, in the hope of hearing more from Maginn. However, I think it very likely the article on the 'Edinburgh' may be thought too long as it is. The article on Hayley will do quite as well next month if you haven't room now. It is very good, however, and if you have room, by keeping out indifferent things, *tant mieux.*

I have corrected a word or two in Maginn's 'Noctes,' but not the article throughout. Don't think of sending me any more proofs. Correct the song yourself.

Here follows a bit of gossip so entirely in the style of Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Skeggs that we are tempted to quote it, if for nothing else than to show how universal that taste is, and how little the ablest are really above the weaknesses which they pounce upon in others with the highest relish of mockery. Lord P. and Major F. are inscrutable:—

The closing story is *veritable*, and I particularly wish it to appear, in order that Lord P. and Major F. may be obliged to tell in print, what for months past they have been talking. In fact, I heard the story from Lord P. myself, and have only altered a few circumstances for obvious reasons. The Archdeacon he called for was not our Butterfly but another; but I know you would like to gratify F. R. S.

This enigmatical note is printed, not for the sake of the little social mystery dead and gone, from which all sense has evaporated, but as a little fossilised froth, if that might be—the sort of thing which, alas! many of the cleverest of us love, like so many chambermaids. It is rare, however, to find in the 'Noctes' anything of this description.

I have run over the Doctor, and added a few pages, as you see, which will make it do very well for a continuation of Timothy—not a P.S. I really have not read the poem, but dipping here and there, it seems worthy of all that Maginn says. Send it back, if you please, by your next parcel. 'Maga' this time will be worthy of herself.

If you have spare room, I am by no means sure that you should not clap in the 'Noctes,' short as they are. The topics will lose something in another month. I would not, however, give motto, &c., but just "Noctes, No. VII.; a fragment."

I return the two beastly books of Col. Brown and Dr Poole. The Review in the former consists, I opine, of some hints of old Mackenzie, dressed up by the chief Blockhead, who evidently works in a muzzle. Old M. had been disgusted with your not inserting his affair on 'Lights and Shadows,' and your mutilations of his review of Miss Lyndsay.[1]

I am delighted with Cobbett, so much so that I wish you would order some of his books by your steam parcel—viz., 'English Grammar,' 3s.; 'Year's Residence in America,' 5s.; Cobbett's Sermons, 3s 6d., to be got at 183 Fleet Street. I really would like to see these, and think the sermons in particular would be famous materials for the article I propose to give you on his late writings next month. You will of course send the 'Edinburgh Review' *quam primum*, and anything that occurs; a stray paper or the like will always be exceedingly welcome. Leigh Hunt's new Indicator is just the old trash over again, and will die in two months, or rather will not live at all. Oh Lord! if it were worth while to touch Dr Poole! but on the whole I am decidedly of opinion that you would do him more good than harm. Jemmy Simpson's review of the Flood of Thessaly is just yours, done into Poolism and Prose. Not one idea but what is palpably and boldly stolen. What cats!

P.S.—Don't send these reviews to the Professor—they will only annoy him if he be in a nervous state; but judge for yourself.

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[1] Both works by Professor Wilson. The articles in question will be found fully discussed in the next chapter.

The Professor can patch this concern as he likes. No traces of the lost packet yet? and I have had sad bother by the accident, for the same parcel contained a lot of Burns's life—which, by the bye, the Professor can puff in a page of dialogue anywhere, if he does not think it worth more. I have made a tailpiece for Cay's article which I now enclose. I have also corrected the slips of the review of Irving. I partly agree with you as to most of your suggestions, but I think there will be a better opportunity of introducing them in the 'Noctes.' As for the Laureate, I am inexorable at present.

You may depend on having Timothy on the 'Edinburgh Review' and 'Liberal' soon: therefore if Maginn or Wilson send anything on that subject let me have it. You should get Galt to write a few paragraphs about Gill's 'Green.' . . . I suppose you will now begin to print your No. Let me know what you *have* and what you *want*. I shall certainly do the Cobbett and Faux on America.

We do not know in what Lockhart had been severe to Southey; but it is well to see that his inexorable attitude did not last. Another letter tells the excellent effect of the publisher's opinion on this subject. "Since you take it so much to heart," he says, "pray draw your pen through all the concluding part of the article about Southey: end it with the serious bit."

The temper of the Magazine got generally smoother as time went on, and other writers came in and the brotherhood became larger. But the 'Noctes' always remained (sometimes disastrously) a safety-valve for the heat of jest or satire or almost irrestrainable impulse of slaughter (not altogether, as witness the regretful giving up of Dr Poole: at the first outset Dr Poole would have been slain and laid out upon the table for demonstration without consideration of his insignificance); and in this lucky medium they had always each other to spend a stray jibe upon, all in

love and without malice. No one could be more ready to applaud, and with the fullest and most cordial praise, than the former Scorpion, though he was still quite willing and pleased by times to use his sting. The reference in the following is to the double number of Sept. 1829, or rather two issued together, a romantic and unusual expedient to use up superfluous material, and also (not less perhaps) to startle and dazzle the world:—

Your two numbers are quite surprising. The Professor is very great indeed. So is Colonna, and so is the Essay on Wordsworth by I can't guess whom. Altogether they must make a grand sensation surely. I send a small notice, as much as in conscience I can offer you, of the St Albans Romance. Dibdin's book has just reached me. I have forgot it, and will look into it, but do get some person who would do the thing more *con amore,* for example Doubleday. I don't like Dr Dibdin—a little glutton; and would like much better to cast about for something of my own devising. Let me know whether you hear again from the Professor, and pray don't send me any more newspapers except the 'Herald.'

I received your packet yesterday evening, and now send you a review of Shelley's poem, which I expect will conclude the Magazine to your satisfaction. It is really a most capital number. Blair's pieces of prose are quite exquisite, and nothing can be better than the Irish articles. The Oehlenschlaeger kept me laughing for several hours. How that *demon* has entered into the very core of Ambrose's! I would have it by all means, and call it perhaps "Horæ Scandicæ, No. II.," not to interfere with any series of seriousness! By the way, who wrote "Microsophus"? *and what is Tom Hamilton doing with himself?*

I am tolerably busy just now, but must and will give you a lift. Indeed both the London Magas are so good this month that even your own superexcellent number will be no more than what was needful. These people can't rival your best

things, but they have many more hands and more steady ones. I don't think Croly is used to give himself much trouble or time. He is able to do far better than he commonly does for 'Maga.' I think I may venture to promise you one way or other two sheets, but I shall not begin till I know what Maginn is likely to be at. 'Don Juan'—these cantos are far better than the last three. Shall I say so?

I could give you a few pages on the "Northern Tales," "Heraldic Anomalies," "Clarke's Travels," "Faux and Cobbett in America,"—any or all of them; but still I desiderate a new and a true and a grasping theme. Help me to that if you can.

1. By all means if you put in the Suicide put him in entire.
2. Poke Tom Hamilton.
3. Could this Courtenay or somebody else not help you to something about the new Law Commission?

I write because you ask me to do so, but I can say nothing but that the number gives me the utmost pleasure, and that I heartily congratulate you on it. It appears to me that it contains all any such thing should contain: liberal and eloquent criticism, sound sensible discussions, and most boyant (*sic*) fun and rich humour. If people are not amused with these 'Noctes,' for instance, Man must have ceased to be the "laughing animal." Altogether admirable is the Irish article: a series of the sort Maginn points at would be of the most important service not to you only, but really to the public.

The greatest beauty of a good number is that it always creates others by the stimulus it gives. I hope Maginn will attack Ireland seriously, now he has begun. By the middle of next month, I think you will be ripe for a real article on Spain; so be collecting all the pamphlets on that subject, and also on Greece.

Don't send me any money just now, as I have enough to bring me to town. But do send me by Tuesday's Blucher, 'Wallenstein': and do try to get the 'Devil's Elixir' out of Gillies's hands. Try whether he would not submit to sit down composedly and translate six or seven of the best scenes of Schiller's 'Wilhelm Tell,' 'Carlos,' or 'Bride of Messina.' If he will, I answer for the prose.

The best puff "John Bull" could give you is to extract something excellently good said on a popular subject. I would leave it to Hook. Upon the whole, I think such a Magazine stands rather above a puff of his. Nothing delighted me more than to see the way in which Hogg is treated—and next 'Noctes' will perhaps lift him yet higher by being partly his own.

P.S.—I open my letter because, on reading Alaric's packet, I see it must be sent back to you without delay. The Fonthill affair will be quite cold by the 1st of December: so you should not meddle with Alaric's views, which, however, are exceedingly laughable, and would have been very good had they come sooner. I am not sure, however, whether either the Professor or I would have liked to see you dishing poor Frisby. Jerdan won't dare to print them. As for the letter of the Goth, 'tis excellent, and will be of use in the 'Noctes' of next number.

The Suicide is really a man of talents. You should request him to write you letters on the Alaric plan as material for 'Noctes.'

We quote these only half-comprehensible allusions to show how the "materials for 'Noctes'" came in from every side. Alaric was, of course, Alaric Watts, whom we now know only as a gentle minor poet, but who was then a bustling and ever-active newspaper-man, pulling the strings of a multitude of journals, as will be apparent hereafter: there has never been any other man of literature with so alarming a name; and thus the tribute of both Goth and Vandal was taken in by the lively commentators. Nothing was amiss that came to their net. There are some individual articles, too, long forgotten, to which the critic returns again and again with an enthusiasm of pleasure. Oehlenschlaeger had kept him "laughing for hours." "On no account omit Oehlenschlaeger; but it will need a little pruning," says another letter. In a third report the circle of its admirers is enlarged. "Sir

Walter Scott, Sir Humphry Davy (query, a Whig or not?), and Mr Stewart Rose all sat bursting their sides over Oehlenschlaeger. Tell the author this," Lockhart says. The author was Maginn, and the article an imaginary review of a play very much in King Cambyses' vein, with copious extracts, which apparently it was supposed even by these admirable authorities a good joke to mark with the Danish dramatist's name, and which called forth a great deal of absurd and witty discussion from various imaginary German critics, principally by Lockhart's hand. Professor Aytoun did the same thing afterwards in 'Firmilian' with great effect, but his supposed author was as fictitious as the tragedy, which proves a certain amelioration in literary morals. Maginn had not joined the band till the year 1821, but plunged at once into the very heart of all its devices, as will hereafter be seen.

That Mr Blackwood, however, did not invariably receive these triumphant 'Noctes' without criticism is apparent from the following letter:—

W. Blackwood to J. G. Lockhart.

12*th August* 1824.

. . . Inclosed you have the slips of the 'Noctes,' which are most lively and amusing. There is one part, however, which I hope you will consider again, the introduction of Crafty and me. Anything, whether praise or ridicule of me as an individual in my own Magazine, will always appear out of place, and though I care, as you know, as little for these things as any one, yet it has always been very unpleasant to me to have myself individually brought forward. On the other hand, I can see no good effect it would have for my Magazine to be the channel through which the praises of the Crafty should be poured in such copious streams. It is not that this worthy and

the Whig gang at his back tried for years to blast and ruin me, and every one they supposed connected with me, that I object to the butter you have given him, but it is because I hate all appearance of hunting liberality and praising of opponents, which is so much the cant of the day. There is not a man who knows anything at all about these matters, who would not laugh and sneer at such a piece of gratuitous blarney. Crafty himself would most likely consider it a sort of quiz, or if he did take it as serious, his vanity is so monstrous that he would not think it came within 100 miles of his splendid merits. It might perhaps please Sir Walter and James Ballantyne, who must feel such a deep interest in C.'s concerns, but James would think that he too ought to have had a mite. I fear you will not be pleased at the view I have taken of this matter, but I am sure if you will consider this matter coolly you will not blame me. Your friend Mr Cay read it, and it struck him exactly as it did me.

He seems, however, to have taken with perfect good-humour a broad sketch of himself, asking a contribution from every new interlocutor, in a subsequent number. One of Lockhart's most persistent jests was the creation of an absurd but amusing individual, under the name of the Odontist, in the very accurately depicted person of a well-known dentist in Glasgow, Mr James Scott, whose rotund figure lent itself to ridicule. Into his mouth some of the merriest sets of verses, songs sung by the imaginary travellers in the *Tent*, and best jokes were put. To judge from what Mrs Gordon says in her life of her father, Professor Wilson, the Odontist took his reputation in very good part, and was not disinclined to pose as one of the contributors to 'Blackwood,' and to accept the dinners and fame thrust upon him in this understanding. I have, however, found a couple of letters from this ill-used

individual, in which his feelings are expressed less amiably. Except for the quite unpardonable use made of his name and personal characteristics, it does not seem that there was much to find fault with in the part he was made to play. The letters are scarcely those of an educated man, and certainly do not give poor Mr Scott any claim to the amusing qualities so forcibly thrust upon him in the pages of 'Blackwood':—

James Scott to W. Blackwood.

23rd August 1822.

I have returned the book you sent me. I looked over it, and I am quite astonished at you for allowing so much freedom with my person—especially one who has wished you well. It shall be at your peril if you publish any more low vulgar stuff concerning me and my name, either directly or indirectly. Every person is disgusted. How would you like it if I were to sit down and write a deal of stuff about you, Mr Galt, or Mr Wilson?

Your immediately suppressing these objectionable articles where I am alluded to, and indemnifying me for the damages done to me by holding me up to ridicule in a false and uncalled-for manner, must immediately take place. Otherways I shall take other steps to stop such malignant proceedings without delay.

Two days later we find a letter to Mr Galt, who evidently was supposed by Mr Scott to be the author of the outrage:—

James Scott to John Galt.

25th August 1822.

If you had seen the impropriety of holding any one up to ridicule—under whatsoever denomination it may be ranked—Jockular, Ironical, or Quizzical, over the table, when well timed, great latitude may be given. But to vend Jocks for money must certainly appear more against the person, so presumptious,

and whatever one may carelessly think, the Public will view it in no other light. Certainly a man must be callous indeed to put up with such freedoms, to say no more of it, for this cannot be allowed. I earnestly beg you not to delay a serious survey of the consequences to yourself, as well as to me and my friends who are exceedingly hurt. Surely strangers think me a poor silly chap, and I am afraid others think so likewise, otherways this trouble might have been spared.

Ungrateful Odontist! Lockhart had just put his own delightful "Lament for Captain Paton" into his mouth, and filled him with merry talk. He was like the Shepherd, who never forgave (yet was always forgiving) the brotherhood for attributing all their most poetical ideas to him. But as we hear no more of Scott's remonstrances, perhaps he was finally persuaded, as Mrs Gordon says, to accept all the fine things put into his mouth.

This personage was the supposed author of the merry and vigorous verses in which fifty rhymes are found for the cheerful name of Blackwood which concludes every stanza. "Our celebrated Jurist long ago," says this poet, "coined twenty rhymes in praise of Mr Packwood," but he pledges himself to a worthier name, and a more "sounding stanza."

III.

Long ruled a Tyrant Fiend the Northern sky,
  Impious and cruel, whom no hand attack would;
Till pitying heaven a stern Avenger, high
  And bold, upreared in thee, illustrious Blackwood!

IV.

No cautious war thy hand would deign to wage,
  At once thy spunck the fortress storm and sack would,
With sheer close thrust the tyrant to engage,
  Alone might suit the energy of Blackwood.

V.

At first high-seated in his old pavilion,
  Fain scorn the unwonted foe the fiendish quack would,
And pass for pride before the subject Million,
  The fear that made him shun the wrath of Blackwood.

VI.

But soon, I knew, thou'dst strip the thin disguise;
  I knew—not long so *crouse* the Tyrant crack would,
Exposed in batter'd plight to vassal eyes,
  All bleeding from the vulture beak of Blackwood.

VII.

The coxcombries of their blaspheming cant,
  Full soon I knew to earth he hew and hack would,
And on the ruins of the unrighteous plant
  The godly trophies of the march of Blackwood.

VIII.

I knew thy thumps to quell the vauntings priggish,
  Of pert and impious upstarts find the knack would,
And paleness mantle every visage whiggish,
  At the bare echo of the name of Blackwood.

IX.

I knew the weight of thy o'ermastering digs,
  Soon teach the pompous swells to shout alack! would,
I knew they soon, (these infidels and Whigs),
  Not blue and yellow look, but blue and black would.

X.

I knew thou wouldst run Leslie such a rig,
  That he no more, like some fierce Don Cossack, would
Against the tongue of Moses shake his wig,
  Cow'd into reverence by the rod of Blackwood.

XI.

I knew thou'dst find a whip for such a pig,
  I knew full soon he stop his impious clack would,
And be constrained to dye his whitening wig,
  By chemic tricks disguising dread of Blackwood.

. . . . . .

XXXI.

There are some utter idiots, and I know it,
  These most the merest balderdash attract would;
These, Burns of Paisley prize above the Poet,
  And Baldwin's JOHN above the JAMES of Blackwood.

XXXII.

There is no arguing with folks like these;
  Even from a martyr's patience it subtract would,
To think within our gracious King's four seas
  Men can exist blind to the worth of Blackwood.

XXXIII.

When wits revile him—'tis mere fudge—no less:
  Even Jeffrey, were he fairly on the rack, would
Make a clean breast, I doubt not, and confess
  He has in private a *penchant* for Blackwood.

XXXIV.

A man like him, (who doubts?) it hugely tickle,
  To hear the slang of his own low Whig pack would,
He knows that he himself has been a Pickle,
  And must excuse the Random Shots of Blackwood.

XXXV.

I think of manhood if he had a particle
  He instantly his nonsense all retract would,
And set about a clever leading article,
  To be inserted (if approved) by Blackwood.

XXXVI.

Envy they say's a rotten tooth—that tooth
  From Jeffrey's jaw, with joy, myself extract would,
Then like the Eagle he'd renew his youth,
  Breathing the "Ellangowan air" of Blackwood.

XXXVII.

Yet if he did so, one cannot deny
  That Leslie grunt like some demoniac would;
That's probably the reason Frank's so shy
  To quit the old Review and write for Blackwood.

. . . . . .

In the meantime Lockhart's own youthful life had come to rapid development while all these "Jocks" and labours were going on. In May 1818, while the air was still full of the dust and commotion roused by the establishment of the Magazine, our young man met Scott at an Edinburgh dinner-party, and was presented to him. "He received me," as we are told in the 'Life of Scott,' "with a cordiality which I had not been prepared to expect from one filling a station so exalted. This, however," he adds, "is the same story that every individual who ever met him under similar circumstances has to tell." The young man had the good luck, when the ladies retired, to find himself next to Scott, and the still greater good fortune to find a subject which interested him—*i.e.*, a recent visit paid to Goethe at Weimar, to his account of which Scott listened with great interest, asking many questions about the man whom he said he had considered as his Master in his youth. He ended by inviting the happy youth to Abbotsford, which was about the finest thing that could happen to a young man of letters in those days. It is well known to what further developments that visit led, and advantages which were mutual: for Scott secured for himself the most admirable son, champion, and companion when he admitted Lockhart into his family. He was married to Sophia Scott in 1820, and from that date his name was never dissociated from that of her father. No more fortunate and happy relationship was ever formed. Scott's own sons have left but little record behind them. They fell back into the common crowd, as we believe it is usual for a race to do after it has come to a climax by producing one of the greatest of

men: and, what also seems usual—obeying a law more subtle still than the fondly cherished theory of development—perished in the direct line, leaving no children to carry on his name. But Lockhart was the son of his heart, his confidant and faithfullest friend through all the troubles that followed, and his children were the only heirs of Abbotsford and their great forebear's glory. Lockhart's letters are seldom without an allusion to Scott after they became thus closely connected. Here is one of a later date which shows the position in which he stood to the great Magician of the age, when his "crowned estate began to pine in that reverse of doom." Blackwood had recently attained civic honours, whence the title:—

ABBOTSFORD, *27th May.*

MY DEAR BAILLIE,—You have indeed much reason to be cockahoop, for your present number is a glorious one throughout, and contains one passage (that on the Bloody hand row) worth alone twenty volumes of ordinary wit. It is the very finest thing I think he[1] ever wrote. I propose being in Edinburgh for two or three days next week, but can't exactly fix a day, as I should not like to leave Sir W. S. on one of those dull days that now chequer his existence. On the whole, however, he is mending, and I hope to see him pretty well restored before the summer is over.

From the same place he writes in 1825 of a visit of Constable, the (supposed) deathless enemy of the brotherhood. "Here is Constable and his hopeful, both as smooth as silk," he says. "I suppose the bargain is being ratified touching the next novel. The Crafty says there is a favourable review of Hogg's Jacobite songs in the forthcoming number of the 'Blue and Yellow.'" It may seem a curious fate

[1] Professor Wilson in 'Maga,' June 1831.

that thus brought "the Scorpion" and "the Crafty" together under one roof, and that so imposing a roof as that of Abbotsford, where all quarrels were bound to be forgotten: but it is still more curious that Lockhart should be now working for that rival publisher in the intervals of the 'Noctes' and other Blackwood productions, and had even, as has been seen, essayed to give the Crafty a large meed of praise in the very pages in which he had been insulted.

Here is a touch of experience and wisdom which showed how happiness and the society of Scott had mellowed the mind and softened the tongue of the Scorpion:—

I have to acknowledge your kindness in sending the 'Quarterly Review' and Magazine,[1] both of which are in their kinds most excellent. Maginn is easily detected, and is as brilliant as ever. . . . Mrs Ogle is exquisite, but I am sorry to say I think altogether unfair. You may have a right to quiz Jeffrey (but his own name were better than a vulgar edition of it), but nobody has a right to meddle with the private amusements of a private lady. How would Mr Galt like to have an account in a Magazine of a little frolic played off in her family by a female of his acquaintance? I have had time and opportunity to reflect on such things, and out of friendship for you and regard for him I would suggest a hint on this subject. After all, the story is inferior to that with W. C. Being introduced to him at a tea-party, she took him all to herself, discussed all her family affairs, and concluded by prevailing on the cynical bitter fellow to avow that he would not think the change of name an insuperable difficulty to his marrying her sole daughter and heiress, the lass with the bit land.

You have also some capital political articles, one of them as good as possible. Coleridge is evidently mad and unintelligible, but I venture to say you will never repent giving him sixteen pages a-month. There will always be thoughts and

[1] February 1821.

expressions of the most inimitable beauty—quite enough to interest all men of letters.

Sir W. S. is in very high feather. I have read two volumes of the 'Pirate,' which is quite charming—as fresh and lively as ever.

The first independent publication (after the translation of Schlegel) by which Lockhart made himself known—though always under the shelter of the Anonymous, a veil which of course was easily penetrable by those whose opinion was of any importance—was the lively piece of contemporary history known as 'Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk.' We find the first sketch of it in the following communication:—

I saw James Ballantyne yesterday, and sounded him a little about Dr Morris. He seems to say he would stake all his credit on the Doctor's success. Scott also writes in great terms touching the Doctor. On the whole, I do think that the writing of the book might be soon accomplished, and would be singularly pleasant in the doing. 3 volumes 12mo, size of 'Waverley.' 1st vol., Edinburgh town described. [Here follows a detailed account of contents, including sketches of the most notable persons in Edinburgh, Scotch Education, Scotch Church, &c., the 2nd volume taking Glasgow for its subject.] Vol. 3rd to be written chiefly by Wilson, and to contain accounts of the Doctor's tours into the Highlands, Tweeddale, and along the Clyde.

All this to be done immediately, *currente calamo*, on smooth paper. What do you think on't? I think it would do much in every way, and reflect much credit if successful on your Magazine. Let me, therefore, hear what you say.

There could be little doubt what Mr Blackwood would say. His eager mind leapt at every feasible literary project, and no doubt he spurred on the writer with all the force of sympathy and encouragement. It was a book entirely concerned with what

we have already called the criticism of life (with apologies to the representatives of Mr Matthew Arnold), which was a kind of thing highly popular at the time, as it is now in a different fashion. It was probably in 1817 that the idea was formed; but it was not till two years later that the work was published, though the bewildering network of advertisements woven about it, and the other frolic circumstances of its origin, go far to make even a proved date doubtful to the bewildered reader. A review professedly of a first edition appeared in the Magazine in the numbers for February and March 1819, which it was part of the mystification to represent as being from no less a hand than that of Scott; but in fact there was no first edition at all, the first actual publication being called the 2nd edition. The reason for this, unless it were, like so many other things, "for fun," we are completely unable to divine. There are a few indications, however, that it did not pass through the press without various skirmishes between author and publisher, in which the former did not always come out victorious. The following scrap is dated, with concise but not very instructive brevity, "5 o'clock," which implies a running controversy over the items of the publication hour by hour, as the printer's boy ran to and fro:—

I have altered all you alluded to except the little bit about Ballantyne, who, you must see, has taken more trouble than usual with me, and well deserves a compliment. He has really served the book by many of his suggestions. I think the vignette will be a glorious *finis* indeed.

And here is a characteristic little outburst:—

I give you permission to alter as you please all about your-

self; but I tell you honestly you have utterly sickened me with your eternal expostulations. Change, but don't speak to me again. If any other person mentioned had been allowed only one 50th of your remarks, the book would have been at the 2nd volume at Doomsday!

After this "Peter" begins to be a familiar figure, entering into the midst of the continual talk about the Magazine and the manner of its concoction:—

I enclose the rest of the 'Noctes.' The Professor may add what he likes. We have of late had so much of Hogg's talk that I have made him say little this time; but if Wilson pleases he can stuff out the porker with some of his own puddings. You must take Cay into your counsels (or somebody) anent the musical concerns. The airs I have given to Peter are what I heard to be popular at the time, and if you choose to give the music, with some of his Italian rhapsodies, you can find it in any shop. And if you have any thorough Italian scholar to go over the proofs of Peter's lingo and improve it, so much the better.

I find that the fool who abuses us in the 'Athenæum' is Charles Knight *alias* "Crito." The attack was begun, tho', by one Forbes, whom you wot of. I leave these folk scatheless for the present.

It need not be added after these curious statistics that 'Peter' was a very successful publication, though its revelations of Edinburgh are not without traces of the mischievous inclination by which Lockhart was distinguished. Murray for one found offence in it, and made its indiscretion recoil on the Magazine, which was scarcely just; but in the meantime Blackwood and his band had become names to conjure by withal, as will be seen from the following letter of Lockhart's:—

I am, of course, highly gratified with all your accounts both of 'Peter' and of 'Maga.' As for the poor Tories here, their views are of course entirely selfish. Sym had a visit from

Crawford Tait t'other day,[1] who evidently came in the view of sounding Timotheus, placed on high amid the sounding choir, touching the possibility of procuring the effectual aid of your friends to a weekly anti-'Scotsman' paper. The Sage scorned the idea in the shape it came in, justly thinking that any proposal (even a more feasible one than this) should have been brought forward through some very different sort of channel. Sym had his gun and bayonet standing in the corner of the room, and every way kept up the character of the Tickler.

I have seen a great deal of Mr Ellis, the Irish barrister, and been much pleased. He went with me to Roslyn yesterday, and left Edinburgh this morning per smack. He seems to have been delighted with everything here, and threatens another visit by Xmas, which I hope he will perform. Much ought to be done and thought in regard to Ireland.

This familiar sentiment has been perennial, as everybody knows, in England and Scotland for a multitude of years: at the moment indicated the agitation for Catholic emancipation was going on—a question very different, however, from those that move us now.

Lockhart wrote, I think, all his novels in this period of his life. They were much above the average as novels, and full of talent, but not of genius; and they made little difference in his reputation or in his career. The first was 'Valerius,' the scene of which was laid in the first century. It was followed by 'Adam Blair' and later by 'Matthew Wald,' both studies, and very sombre ones, of Scotland in his own day: between which came a novel full of university experiences, called 'Reginald Dalton, a Story of Oxford Life.' We hear, however, very little of them in these letters; and though moderately successful,

[1] Robert Sym, already referred to, called in the Magazine Timothy Tickler.

they cannot be said to have given their author any distinct standing-ground as a writer of fiction. Galt, with much less power, was infinitely more popular. Lockhart's chief Scottish story, 'Adam Blair,' was not of the kailyard by any means, but a strange and terrible study of passion. There is a curious reference in one of his notes to his own timidity in respect to original composition, and want of confidence in his genius, which are scarcely sentiments we should have expected from Lockhart.

"I am so subject to being disheartened, that I suspect I shall never do anything without the Famulus Typographicus to help me on. I have therefore some thoughts of sending you a little bit of the novel immediately, to try that way. But the truth is, I scarcely have the courage." Some time later he continues: "I send you the manuscript of the commencement. Have it copied and set up in common novel style by James Ballantyne, and if I like it sufficiently when I see it printed, I will go on speedily —at present I want courage."

A correspondence between an author and publisher, even when so fragmentary as this, would scarcely be complete without a discussion about money, and accordingly it is no surprise to find some letters in which this subject is taken up with all the warmth and baffled helplessness of a man fighting in the dark—a mood perhaps characteristic of an author's frame of mind in every such discussion. There is something, I cannot tell why, which is exasperating beyond measure in the constantly recurring contrast between literary applause and substantial success. A man finds himself praised on all sides, even perhaps with a

kind of enthusiasm by the lips of his publisher himself: he is told (but this not generally by the lips of the publisher) that his book is read everywhere, and that the opinion of the general public coincides with that of his literary friends. To be a little elated, to hold his head in the air, and to expect wealth and distinction to follow, are very natural things; but it must be allowed that in a great many instances they do not follow to any great extent, and the author stands bewildered, hearing perhaps (as happens in some cases) that the publisher has even lost by this successful publication of his. What does it mean? It was in this puzzled and wrathful attitude of mind that Lockhart wrote as follows:—

J. G. Lockhart to W. Blackwood.

I have to acknowledge the receipt of £40 for my contributions to the May and June numbers of the Magazine. I have also, since you have thought fit so minutely to allude to other matters, looked over the whole of the last six numbers, and find that you are quite correct in regard to the number of pages my pen has furnished. I find also that all my articles during these months amount to sixteen[1] in number, and that of these exactly eight contain, and eight do not contain, extracts. Now, I have no hesitation in telling you most distinctly two separate and distinct things: my first, that I think I have been during the last year by far the most efficient of your contributors, and that I consider the reviews of new books furnished by me in that time quite equal, taken altogether, to any equal number of articles you have had, they being equally interesting, and there being fewer people who could furnish the like. (Indeed

[1] The articles in the earlier Magazines were generally short, or at least many were short, with one of greater importance now and then. Later practice changed this, and for a long time there were no more than seven or eight articles altogether in one number, all more or less of importance, and the rate of payment was doubled or more than doubled.

you have not had a good reviewer of literary works but myself and Wilson, in our separate styles, for the Doctor has scarcely tried.) Secondly, I do think that a person who does so much for your book ought to make more by doing so; and that, having entire confidence in your general liberality and the most perfect reliance on your kindly feelings to me personally, I am therefore under the necessity of considering 'Maga' as by no means in a flourishing condition.

What I can in justice to myself do for 'Maga' shall be done, because I am your fast friend and hers; but I cannot go so far as to think it probable, with this Shakespeare on my hands, that I shall be able to do so much for some time to come as I have recently been in the custom of doing. I earnestly hope, therefore, since the Professor appears to be in such an indolent if not indifferent key, you will be enabled to get Maginn to do more—a great deal more—for you this summer than hitherto he has done. Do persuade him to give you more of his mind, and his beautiful scholarship.

I shall perhaps say something more as to all this soon.

These were the happy days when Magazine writers were not as plentiful as blackberries, and when a writer could address his publisher in this way without receiving a polite answer next morning in the words of King Henry when he heard of the slaughter of Percy at Chevy Chase—

> "I have a hundred captains in England
> As good as ever was he."

No man is indispensable, the proverb says: and certainly nowadays no man is so indispensable to a periodical as Lockhart believed himself to be, and to some extent was. He followed up this letter, presumably, for still we have no dates to guide us, with the following, which evidently refers to some very special and carefully written article:—

I think you will not accuse me of any impropriety when I

say that the enclosed Essay[1] has cost me a great deal of time and thought, and that if it be printed in the Magazine I shall consider myself entitled to be paid for it upon quite a different footing than from usual articles.

I am of opinion that such a view of such a subject would at this particular time attract great notice even in the highest quarters; and really that important practical results might follow. It is possible that all this is sanguine nonsense in me; but, however, I beg you to read my paper and state your feeling.

Mr Blackwood's reply was full of enthusiastic praise of the article; but his letter does not seem to have been at all satisfactory to his correspondent. Lockhart replied briefly, explaining that he had not originally designed the article in question for the Magazine, and requesting its return: a communication which called forth the following reply:—

W. Blackwood to J. G. Lockhart.

13*th June* 1825.

I am quite aware that the article you were so good as to send me was the result of knowledge and experience which few possessed, and that therefore anything I could offer in the shape of money was not adequate to its intrinsic worth. I felt proud in receiving the article, as a mark of friendship to myself as well as of the deep interest you continued to take in my Magazine, and I trusted that by means of it and others the work would receive such an impulse that I should very soon have it in my power to show you substantially that I was not insensible of what you had done for me. I certainly did look forward with some confidence to being able to pay *all* your articles in future at a higher rate than it had hitherto been in my power to do. To pay you, as I have already said, I could not; but I flattered myself that, independent of the interest you take in my Magazine, its very success would prompt you to write articles when you did not feel inclined to do anything

[1] Probably an Essay on Universities.

else, and on the other hand I could have the satisfaction of offering you more and more liberal remuneration. This has all along been my first and most earnest wish, and if my means have not yet equalled my wishes, I am sure you will give me credit for its not being my fault. I hope you will excuse me for saying so much in explanation of the views and feelings under which I acted. Had I known, however, that you had sat down to this article with other views than sending it to me for the Magazine, I would have begged of you to tell me what these views were, and to the very utmost of my powers I would have endeavoured to promote them. And had I likewise known that it had been the labour of some weeks, but that you thought the Magazine the fit channel for giving your sentiments to the public (and I still flatter myself it is the best), I should have requested the favour, instead of naming any sum myself, that you would frankly tell me what I could send you for it, taking all circumstances into consideration. This is my earnest desire now, and I hope you will do me this favour.

My most ardent desire is that you should continue to give your powerful aid to my Magazine, but I never dreamt that you were to devote any portion even of your leisure time to it, without being paid liberally. It would give me the deepest pain if you did not feel satisfied on this head. In future therefore, if agreeable to you, I would wish very much that you would send me a note from time to time for £20, £30, or £50, just as you yourself thought right; or if you preferred it, that you would say a quarterly or annual sum you would draw, leaving it entirely to yourself to send such contributions as your leisure or inclinations prompted you to write: then at the end of the year you would also notify to me any additional sums, if you found you had done more than you had laid your account with.

I have written this letter with great pain in one sense. I dislike so much any dissensions when mere money is concerned. I have written it, however, with the deepest anxiety that you may be satisfied as to my feelings and conduct. I cannot say a fiftieth part of what I feel on this matter, so deeply interesting to me. All I shall further say is, that if I did not feel from the bottom of my heart that I had acted all along in a

way deserving of your friendship, I should feel myself most unworthy of it.

If we did not know to the contrary, we could almost imagine there was a certain irony in the tone of this extraordinarily liberal letter, and in the sudden granting thus at a word of any or every claim the startled author might bring forth. Perhaps it was this sentiment which made Lockhart answer it in a way more consistent with such a hypothesis than with the real *effusion* with which it was written :—

It is not necessary that you and I should at this time of day write long letters on the subject of your Magazine. I perfectly appreciate your warm feelings to me personally, and I am sure you will never have any *good* reason to suspect me of not desiring to see you and all your concerns prosper.

As to bargaining with you or with anybody about money in this style, it is out of the question. I put a paper in your hands, and asked what you would think it worth for your Magazine. We, it appears, thought differently as to that matter. I can see nothing here but what happens every day in the world. You will return me the paper, and the whole affair is as if it had never been. I told you plainly I was not thinking of the thing as an ordinary contribution to the Magazine. It was a solitary effort, and, as hinted, my original intention was something in the nature of a volume on Universities in general, an intention to which, when leisure serves, I may recur.

I think the enclosed paper very admirable indeed, and that it will have a powerful effect.

P.S.—Allow me to beg that this may be the last of a correspondence which, knowing you as I do, I am sure must be equally painful to us both. Think anything you please, except that there is or has been the least touch of unkindness in my feelings. Nothing is more remote from my thoughts. Indeed, the tone of your letter is only a great deal too generous towards me personally.

Blackwood answered on the 16th June as follows :—

Since you desire it, I lose not a moment in returning your MS. I do hope, however, it is only for the present. You know better than I can tell you that this article is of the highest importance to me. Mortified as I certainly would be were it not to appear in the Magazine, I do not wish to press upon you to send me this article unless you yourself are perfectly satisfied with regard to doing so. I have no wish to recur to anything that has already passed; but while I know you hate bargaining about the price of this or anything else, I hope you know me sufficiently to believe that it is not the consideration of any sum whatever which would tempt me to act in the smallest way differently from what you would expect from me. Saying this, I leave the matter entirely to your own good feelings.

I am unable to say what was the precise occasion of the letter which follows: probably it was after the unhappy affair of the duel in which Mr John Scott, the editor of the 'London Magazine,' met his death. The great shock of this fatal event, and the depression into which Lockhart fell, would seem to have given him the greatest distaste for his previous work, and everything connected with it: from whence no doubt arose the report that he was about to withdraw from the Magazine altogether.

W. Blackwood to J. G. Lockhart.

Setting my own wishes and interests entirely out of the question, I regret, on your own account, that you should feel such a disinclination to do anything for the Magazine. Either by yourself or your friends it has been given out that you had dropped all connection with it. These reports I never listened to, and I could not bear to notice them to you; for, if you did not see the matter in the same point of view as I did, anything I had to say would be apt to appear to you as merely proceeding from selfish views of my own. My lips therefore have been sealed, and whatever I have felt or suffered I have kept to myself. Now, however, that you have introduced the subject yourself, I cannot help saying a few words with regard to it.

You will, I am sure, do me the justice to believe that, had it been in my power to prevent it, never should you have had one uneasy or unpleasant feeling from anything connected with the Magazine. Whatever could tend to your honour or advantage has always been my first and most anxious wish, and to attain this I never have, and never could have, considered any sacrifice as too great. Had I for one moment believed that it would be either for your honour or advantage to cut all connection with the Magazine, you may rest assured I would have been the very first person to tell you so. My strong and decided conviction, on the contrary, has been that you owed it to yourself to stand forward in a manly way, so as to show that the attacks of the miscreants who slandered you so foully and so falsely were of no avail, and only recoiled on themselves. Their sole object was to induce you and others to abandon the Magazine, and any quailing was giving them a triumph. From the disagreeable occurrence which has been so annoying to you personally, it is not to be wondered at that you should have felt sore and unhappy. For months, therefore, I have said little, but left the matter entirely to your own feelings. If, however, you had given me your wonted confidence, I would have told you what my impressions were, and that they were no friends of yours who circulated reports of your having abandoned the Magazine: for were this true it would be an acknowledgment that the personal attacks upon you were well founded, and you were therefore forced to give way to public opinion. The Magazine supported with talent and spirit, I have always believed, would do honour to all acquainted with it, and put to shame all those who attempted to run it down.

As to any claims of my own upon you, these I have never mentioned and never will. Only this I will say, that if you knew a thousand part of the miseries I have endured—and much of them on your account—you would have felt more for me than you appeared to do for many months past, when I seemed to be left in a state of desertion by those from whom I expected different things.

It is most painful and distressing to me even to allude to any of these things, but I try to assure you that if I did not think it would be highly creditable to you to give your aid

to the Magazine, and receive a most liberal remuneration for your contributions, I should be the last person in the world to have expected one line from you.

The last letter on this subject is the following. The matter had evidently grown more and more serious as it went on:—

J. G. Lockhart to W. Blackwood.

I do not think any good end is likely to be served by a correspondence on these subjects—concerning points of which it is evident enough our opinions are very widely different. There are also some expressions in your letter which give me pain, and I should be sorry to have disagreeable feeling increased by any repetition of the like. I am not aware of having been at all the reverse of *open* in regard to the Magazine. On the contrary, I think at least eighteen months ago I told you very distinctly that I was resolved periodical literature should never occupy any serious part of my attention. The longer I live I am the more steadily impressed with the utter worthlessness of that sort of thing. I have already had too much share in it; but I see neither the necessity nor the propriety of my having more connection with the periodical press than any given individual—unless I please. There are always enough of young people to write for Magazines, if they be paid. At the same time, I never have made or expressed any resolution not to write in your Magazine. I intend to send you from time to time anything that occurs to me, and I shall be happy if what I send proves acceptable. I have shown Mr Wilson your letter and this answer, and I am happy to say he approves of the light in which I have viewed the subject.—Believe me, very sincerely yours, J. G. LOCKHART.

Was this note, so solemnly signed (the others only bear initials), intended for the moment to be the last? This is what we do not know; but if so, the intention was speedily abandoned. The "disagreeable occurrence" referred to in Mr Blackwood's letter was with-

out doubt, as we have indicated, the bitter and painful controversy with Mr John Scott,[1] the editor of the 'London Magazine,' which, after many discussions, sending of embassages on both sides, and publication of opposing "Statements," was suddenly turned into unexpected tragedy. The ridicule with which public sentiment had already begun to treat the practice of duelling, and the particular jest supposed to be involved in a projected duel between two men whose weapon was the pen and not the sword, were abruptly changed into horror and dismay by the death of Scott, not even by the hand of the man he had assailed, but by that of Lockhart's friend and intended second, Mr Christie, who had been forced into the field after the first challenge had been insultingly refused. It is impossible to treat a matter lightly which ends in this way, otherwise the exaggerated abuse of Scott, and mock heroics of both parties, would be both ludicrous and offensive. To call a man a *professional scandal-monger, a mercenary dealer in calumny and falsehood*, because of even the worst of the attacks upon the Cockney School, was of course excessive and absurd. Whereas, on the other side, Lockhart's resentment of attacks upon himself, who had made so many light-hearted attacks upon others, and never hesitated to give forth a scathing word, was equally ridiculous. The elaborate accounts given by both parties of the discussions that preceded the duel might have afforded an admirable subject for Lockhart's own power of stinging banter. He would have held both sides up

[1] The reader will find this miserable story much more fully treated in Mr Andrew Lang's 'Life of Lockhart,' along with other incidents of his career.

to the laughter of the world had the case not been his own—which was a very weak point with the wits of the period. They loved to goad and sting their neighbours, often into outbursts of fury; but they could not bear any touch upon themselves.

Nothing could be more ludicrous than to describe the gay band of young authors as "miscreants whose outrages in print have for the last four years desolated private society in Edinburgh, interrupted the course of friendship, and ruined the harmony of social intercourse," unless it was the solemn but out-of-date stateliness of the warlike response, the medieval formality of the counter-check quarrelsome, and all the rest. But the laughter is hushed when this antiquated farce ends in the sacrifice of a man's life, especially when an entirely innocent person is brought in to take the vicarious weight of such a quarrel upon him. The whole matter was looked upon with distress and pain, but also at first with something of that fictitious admiration of an "affair of honour" which still lingered in men's minds, in the circle in Edinburgh. The reader is in a position to know how true to fact (if also at the same time a little untrue in sentiment) was the denial finally extracted from Lockhart of being editor or part editor of 'Blackwood's Magazine.' It was perfectly true, in so far that he was in no point of view the last authority, and that he never was a salaried editor deriving payment for his work as such, except for the very brief period of Murray's influence (if then), when his position was little more than nominal; but that he was one of the mystic Three who presided over everything in the Magazine cannot be doubted. Mr Blackwood preserved his Veto and his

opinion, and was perfectly *dans son droit* in saying that he had no editor. The Veiled Tribunal was much more interesting than that institution of a responsible editor and a mere business publisher, which was more common; but we may allow that it was difficult for the ordinary public to understand how the system worked.

I have thought that the record of this long and close connection would not be complete without some notice of the storms which now and then would pass across the skies, terrible, but luckily temporary. In August of the same year in which that alarming hurricane occurred, we find all tribulations blown away, and the usual atmosphere of confidential friendship and co-operation completely restored:—

J. G. Lockhart to W. Blackwood.

DUBLIN, 14 *August* 1825.

I daresay you think I have been wrong in not writing sooner. The fact is, I have been kept eternally on the move, and have never had a pen in my hand except to do a sort of journal in the shape of letters to my wife—which you shall if you please have a reading of when the series is complete. I have seen and heard much worthy of remembrance; but am now thoroughly homesick, and happy to say that the day after to-morrow we sleep on Welsh ground if we escape the dangers of the steam voyage.

I have found almost every person in society here pro-Catholic, and yet have been in company with but two Catholic gentlemen so far as I know—and the result of my whole observation is, that Dr Maginn speaks the exact truth as to this matter in his Literary Sketch, which, by the way, I never got hold of till yesterday, when, on returning from a fortnight's ramble about Killarney, I stumbled unexpectedly on an old acquaintance in the shape of Mr Curry, and from him got No. 103 of 'Maga'—and an excellent number I think it is.

I assure you the High Church here swear by you, but of these

we have, accidentally I suppose, met but few. The provost of the College here and Dr Brinkley the Astronomer both told me your articles on the Catholic question were the only things worthy of being perused. 'Maga' I have never yet met with, in consequence of many unfortunate accidents.

This expedition was taken, as the reader will recollect, in attendance upon Scott, when Sir Walter received the unanimous homage of his admirers in Ireland. The party returned by Wales, and on their way north visited various hospitable houses in the Lake country, and among others Wilson's at Elleray. There are some notes connected with that last visit which I reserve to elucidate an incident in the Professor's life.

In the autumn of 1825, soon after his return from the Irish expedition, a curious embassy from London and the great house of Murray arrived at Chiefswood, where Lockhart was then staying, in the striking person of young Benjamin Disraeli, with various great projects and proposals in his hands. His chief object was to induce Lockhart to accept the editorship of a new daily paper which Murray had set his heart on establishing, and, in default of that, the 'Quarterly Review,' then wavering in uncertain hands after the death of Gifford. Lockhart's account of the matter to Blackwood would seem to have been in answer to some question addressed to him. There is no date upon the note in which he allows that it is "most true that Murray is about to have a daily paper, and that, I think, under most triumphant auspices, and it is also true that I was asked to be the conductor. But I *declined* this at once, and it was on that that the offer of the Review was made and accepted. Of

course as to contributing to his paper I shall most likely do so, as I believe all his adherents mean to do, but anything more or even much of this would be quite out of the question." There is no note of any feeling on the part of Blackwood of disappointment and dismay in the loss of so important a contributor, though it can scarcely be supposed that it was agreeable news to him. The only comment we find on the event is in the graceful and cordial note of farewell which the publisher addressed to Lockhart on his final departure:—

W. Blackwood to J. G. Lockhart.

4th November 1825.

Deeply as I must ever regret your leaving Edinburgh, and seriously as I must ever feel your loss, yet I cannot but rejoice that you have now a field for exertion worthy of yourself. It is impossible for me to express how much I despise and feel a contempt for the poor pluckless animals here, whose business it was to hold out objects to you that would have made it worth while for you to remain among all the friends who will feel your loss so much. But all's for the best, and it is needless to regret what cannot be helped.

Though it is thus very clearly evident that there was no breach of the old bonds, there is no doubt that Lockhart had been since his marriage drawn much into the circle of Scott, and withdrawn from the constant communications of former days. His removal to London would seem, however, to have warmed his heart both to his old familiar companions and to the frolicsome labours of his youth. The great catastrophe which gave so melancholy a close to the noble life of Scott took place shortly after, indeed was threatening before Lockhart's removal, and the first letter from London is full of the thrill and agitation of that great

event, augmented perhaps by a sense of the less warm atmosphere of understanding and sympathy which was around him in his new sphere:—

J. G. Lockhart to W. Blackwood.

25 Pall Mall, *8th February* 1826.

I called on Cadell when the alarm was at its height, and was rejoiced to be set at ease as to you. Thank God you have escaped being dragged into the whirlpool with your Leviathan neighbours.

I have lost much money by him and others, and have been wounded to the very soul with the far greater distresses of Sir Walter Scott. I am sure you will excuse long letters at such a time from your always most truly, J. G. Lockhart.

I expect to have in my first No. a review of Mr Bell's book on Italy, and also of the 'Subaltern.' Pray forward me early copies of anything you have, and remember me most affectionately to all the Divan. God bless you!

Lockhart's heart was full, with the chill of novelty and separation from his friends just when he wanted sympathy most, and this burst of home-sickness and unusual utterance touches the reader all the more from so self-contained a man. Did he miss, one wonders, the periodical hazards of the Magazine, the exciting reign of the irregular, the panics as to whether the Professor would be ready, prolonged almost to the eve of the publishing day? One cannot but feel that the respectable business-like level of the 'Quarterly' must have palled upon him now and then, and that he felt the sudden cutting off of the fun and frolic, even if, to a man sobered by early experience, those too had previously begun to pall. Notwithstanding all the sins of which these companions had been guilty, and all their devious ways, we are conscious of a sympathetic enlivenment when we find the

correct editor of the stately 'Quarterly' stealing off with delight to "make a 'Noctes.'" It suggests a weariness with the new circumstances, in which there is an almost tragic touch:—

J. G. Lockhart to W. Blackwood.

BRIGHTON, *Augt.* 8, '26.

Dr Maginn paid me a visit here about four weeks ago, and promised to come back soon for the purpose principally of making a 'Noctes.' But since then I have neither seen nor heard anything of him, nor indeed do I know where he is or what he is doing at this moment, though I think I can still trace his pen occasionally in 'The New Times and Rip,' and thence conclude he has made some partnership with Mudford. I am writing him to-day, and as soon as we can meet depend upon a packet. His account of the Westmoreland election is most rich, and I am on many accounts sorry the Professor was not there to help in and enjoy the triumph. Lord Lowther is rather displeased about his non-appearance, which, no doubt through some blunder, he thought he was to depend upon. I hope Lord L. tipped the Doctor decently; but he said nothing to me on that delicate topic, except, indeed, that there had been a discovery of some seventy years' old Rum, of which he (the Doctor) had been invited to take away some dozens for London consumption. Wordsworth and Maginn (!) wrote, verse about, a song of Betty Martin, &c., which I thought no great shakes for all the illustrious copartnery. I wish some of you would tell me what old Crafty is doing. When one sees the firm on title-pages, just as of yore, one begins to doubt the fact of a failure after all.

My little boy improves so much here that we shall scarcely leave the place while he can bathe in the sea. To us it has no other recommendation, as we know nobody here except poor William Rose, who is in a very invalid and unconversable condition. The Tiger, as you have perhaps heard, is going shortly to Canada to hunt bears and other fellow-creatures. This will be a relief to the Professor's imagination, though to me, I assure you, it is a sorrow.

What a contrast this melancholy seclusion at the

so-called gay watering-place to the happy company and communion of Chiefswood, with Edinburgh and all the brethren so close at hand! The Tiger was a certain Dr Dunlop,[1] a great hunter and traveller, whose literary manners and morals the society of Maginn and his wild band did not improve.

During the autumn Mr Blackwood was able to send to the exile news of his beloved home and friends:—

W. Blackwood to J. G. Lockhart.

EDIN., 23 *Augt.* 1826.

About three weeks ago I spent a few days at Chiefswood with our excellent friend Capt. Hamilton. It is a delightful spot, and I wonder how you could leave it. I was a good deal with Sir Walter, who is really in excellent health and spirits. That old tiresome pedant Dr J. had been staying some days with Sir Walter, to the great annoyance of poor Terry, and every one who happened to be there. When you see Terry he will give you some droll sketches of the Doctor. At last, to the relief of every one, he took his departure in Sir Walter's carriage, and when stepping in he made a great many fawning speeches as to his regret if he took away the carriage when Sir Walter might be wanting it, to which the Baronet replied in his good-humoured way that "his horses could not be better employed than in carrying Dr J. on his journey." This Peter Poundtext swallowed of course as a great compliment, while Terry and the ladies could with the greatest difficulty contain themselves.

The following letters will show how difficult Lockhart found it to cut himself free from his old habits of work and his first love:—

J. G. Lockhart to W. Blackwood.

28 *March* '26, 25 PALL MALL.

Having a private hand [this was in the days of heavy

[1] Dr Dunlop was a surgeon in the East India Company's service, and was of great renown as a shooter of what is now called big game.

postage] I make up a small packet of notes for members of your Divan. I was delighted with "Cottages" and the "Naval Sketch-Book." They show that our friend is in his best spirits as well as power; and if that be so, all is right.

You will perhaps say I am infected with the chill air of the Metropolis. But I wish, in spite of that, to say a single word on a very delicate subject.

Attack Political Economy as much as you like, but *don't permit* this Robertson to go on attacking so savagely the *motives* of Canning, &c. Why should *you* and *Wilson* suffer—in yourselves, perhaps—very probably (in *his* case *extremely* probably) in your *families*, for the sake of allowing a person of this kind to insult such a man as Canning? Depend on it, my dear Professor, this is worth a thought for *you*. If you *make* the Magazine by such papers as the "Cottages," you will be blamed or lauded for its politics, as the case may be. What I wish to see particularly avoided is any allusion to Canning *personally;* and I know he feels that personally, and *avenges* it so also. You will at least take this in good part.

The next reflects Lockhart's own circumstances, projects, and surroundings in a very interesting way:—

J. G. Lockhart to W. Blackwood.

25 Pall Mall, *Nov.* 16, 1826.

I lose no time in expressing the delight with which I have read the demolition of MacCulloch. Need I say how anxious I shall be to know what effect is produced on Jeffrey? Sir W. Scott is quite in raptures with it; so is Croker, to whom I talked yesterday morning anent it; and so must be every one. I have already had the satisfaction of showing it to one or two Whigs, and, that they all might see it, I have left my copy on the table of the Athenæum, "with Mr Blackwood's compliments." I hope this was right.

We are going to live on Wimbledon Common for this winter. Johnny *will not do* in London. This is inconvenient in some respects; but it will add to my leisure, which already has begun to hang heavy on my hands. I do not think it is quite

right or fair in me to assist in the Magazine while I have the Review on my hands, and I have a feeling on the subject that I can't well express; but I do not understand Murray having any suspicion that I was not doing whatever I did in the periodical line for the 'Quarterly.' Besides, your political tone must not be mine. I think it is wrong in all points of view, and particularly in the personal style in which Canning has been attacked in a work to which Wilson is an avowed contributor of *the* first importance. Others may point the dart; so it is. But who gives the shaft its wings? But for Wilson's wit, how few would read R.'s declamations, however clever!

But now to my business. The same feeling which withholds me from publishing essays in 'Maga,' or a kindred one, prevents my wishing to have anything whatever to do with Murray out of his Review. We could not meet on fair terms. Old friends who had perfect confidence in each other, as I hope is the case with *us*, might no doubt do so; but *verbum sat.* to you. I have enough to manage without quarrels already.

I have in short a couple of post 8vos (*peut-être* 3) to dispose of—*i.e.*, shall have by the end of the year. The plan is this: I make an English lord (something like Dudley and Ward) take a place like Mar Lodge for the autumn. He brings down in his train the usual appendages of these great establishments—a character not unlike Coleridge for one, a sort of Croker for another, a Rogers for a third, perhaps a little of Hook, &c. I bring these Southerners into close communication with a set of your Northern lights—disguises of Scott, Jeffrey, and so forth; make them discuss the differences between England and Scotland in various points of manners, feelings, education, &c., &c., and illustrate their respective views with tales, all of them founded on fact, some comic, some tragic. I think to call the book 'Diversions of——say Glenmar,' a little *romance* of conversation.

Tell me frankly what you think of all this. I have certainly no ambition to make one of Colburn's authors, but I am well aware that you may be far from anxious to publish much at present, and may have your hands full. I expect that you will

sacredly keep what I have said to yourself in the meantime. I do not even except the Professor for this once.

We have been, as you guess, in a horrible hubbub. Sir Walter will be in Edinburgh in about ten days. We dined at Croker's yesterday — party to meet the Unknown, the Speaker and Theodore Hook. These three sweet lads are always together.

The Doctor, poor fellow, has of late done one very good paper for me, but what he spends his time in God only knows. I never saw a man grow more inferior to himself in a short time than he has to the O'Doherty of former days. Newspaper scribbling has totally destroyed a style that was always too light and hasty. There is now little whalebone indeed remaining.

J. G. Lockhart to W. Blackwood.

Sept. 4, '28.

The Professor on Sir Humphry was capitally good, but I think (I am no angler) unjustifiably severe, particularly considering the circumstances of the book being written by a great man after two strokes of palsy, in miserable dejection of spirits and in health hopelessly shattered; but all this Wilson knew not, and I take it he hates Sir H. Davy for some private reason or no reason, as I daresay I should have done, had I not happened to see a good deal of him. . . . However, Sir Walter is to review Sir H. in the 'Quarterly,' so the Baronet will have it with the hair as well as against it.

'Tis now said the Speaker goes to the Admiralty with a peerage; but no one is in town, and indeed I seldom go on the Stones, even when I am here. Next week I am going to Chelsea to see Gleig for two or three days. He has some sermons, some novels, and some histories all at press in London at this moment, how much more in Edinburgh you can tell. Colburn has given £750 for his novel, 3 vols., 'Chelsea Pensioners,' at least the Sub says so.

I beg my love to Wilson, Cay, &c., &c., if any such people be now about the old haunts. I fear I shall not even get down this autumn; but as Johnny has rallied, we are really and seriously planning to be at Chiefswood all next summer, which I think must stop my hair getting grey so fast as it at present seems to be doing."

1829.

The Doctor and I have dined again at the Salopian, and made out the plan, which shall be filled up fitly and sent off by mail on Thursday next. I hope this will do. We are to give you our "Mr Theodore" as an interlocutor and improvisatore.

But wait until Southey's new book has been properly puffed in the 'Quarterly,' and then for a grand 'Noctes' indeed. I mean to call up the shade of George Buchanan and introduce him to Hogg, who (Hogg) shall enlighten George, after the fashion of the Laureate enlightening Sir Thomas More, as to the history of the last two or three centuries, and the present state of politics and literature. I think Hogg explaining the steam-engine to Buchanan will answer.

I expect at your hands efficient support of the Family Library, which if it turn out well may be a valuable property to me. I think I told you I have the third of it. We have now put the Napoleon to press again, having sold all the 6500 printed originally of the first vol. and all but 200 of the second.

"You have, indeed, gloriously performed your promise," says Mr Blackwood in reply, "and the 'Noctes' has even gone beyond what I expected. I am so glad, too, that the Doctor has again made an exertion, and done what is worthy of himself. The whole will make no little sensation." In this case it seems also that the labourers were satisfied with their reward.

J. G. Lockhart to W. Blackwood.

June 5, 1829.

Pardon for not answering sooner and acknowledging your enclosure, which the Doctor and I halved, and swore was munificent. Your No. is a good one. Do you want another 'Noctes'? If so, speak, and we shall have another dinner at the Salopian—that's all.

Here is Galt, as large as life and as pompous as ever, full of title-pages and unwritten books, the 'Tyger,' the 'Squaws,' and, I am sorry to add, his own personal troubles, which are neither few nor trivial.

From these last it would appear that the editor of the 'Quarterly' did not consider such compositions as those which he prepared in escapades at the Salopian along with Maginn to be any real infringement of his rule against publishing "Essays in the Magazine." No doubt the delightful rush and impulse "to make a 'Noctes,'" recalling so much of the joys of youth, and the wild and flying inspiration of the past, was an exception, as it evidently was a delight to him amid the studied decorum and stateliness of Pall Mall. And that his youthful spirit was still but little modified (while always exaggerated by his coadjutor) will appear from the following letter, so sympathetic and regretful, yet resolute, with which the presiding genius in Edinburgh received one of these dashing effusions. It was written in the year 1827, though I am not able to give the precise date. It ought, therefore, to precede some of the above letters, but will, I think, be better understood by coming here. Lockhart continued to send 'Noctes,' or contributions to the 'Noctes,' for many years.

W. Blackwood to J. G. Lockhart.

I have not been so happy for a long while as I was last Sunday when Cay called at my house and gave me the article you had been so good as to send me for 'Maga.' The moment he left me I sat down and literally devoured it. I cannot tell you how much I enjoyed the admirable way in which you show up the Cockney historical romance—the satire is so keen, and the sketches are so graphic. Forthwith, though it was Sunday evening, Alexander and I began to copy it, and before we went to bed we got nearly half through our task.

Next day, however, when I considered the whole more closely than it was possible for me to do under my first excitement, I began to think with agony whether or not others would see

the thing in the same point of view as I did. The fools and the malicious are so much more common in this world than their opposites, that there appeared to me not a little risk of the paper being either mistaken or misrepresented. It struck me that the stupid would take some of the sketches *literatim*, and consider it an unwarrantable liberty to represent Lord Melville in a kilt; but this mattered not much, as they would be soon enlightened, and, as your friend the Secretary has it, stirred up with a long pole. What weighed with me was the use a certain gang might make of the article, and the annoyance it might be to Sir Walter Scott. And if you will consider the matter calmly, I think you will see I had some ground for my fears on this head.

The object of your satire is clearly to ridicule the Cockney jumble of Brambletye Hall, and in this you are most successful. But when one reflects that this creature is a mere imitator of Sir Walter, and that any travestie is so much more applicable to an original than to a mere copy, for all readers are much more familiar with the Waverley romances than with this Brambletye trash, surely there is some reason to fear that such satire would be applied and caught up with delight by the whole press gang as appearing in my Magazine. Among other delectable quizzes that might have been quoted and commented on with this view, nothing could have been more apposite than your most droll sketch of the Duke of Wellington's Address to Napoleon's stucco figure as an inimitable counterpart to Cromwell before the picture of Charles I. This and some other things I am pretty sure Sir Walter would not have liked, and as I never could have revealed to him or to any one who was the quizzer, he would have thought it odd of me to allow such a thing to appear in 'Maga.'

It was with a very heavy heart, therefore, that I at last resolved to give the MS. back to Mr Cay. In this I have acted solely on my own judgment, for there is no one that I could venture to consult on such a matter. You will probably think I have decided wrong, and that it is from mere timorousness that I have not ventured to insert the article. I can only say that I have stated exactly what influenced me, and that the loss of such an article I feel to be a very severe one.

The correspondence, however, now seems to be interrupted by many such differences of opinion, but we add such extracts from it as may serve to show Lockhart's continuous feelings to his old home and friends among the changed circumstances of his career :—

J. G. Lockhart to W. Blackwood.

30th January 1830.

These double numbers are capital. The Professor, since he is thus alive and kicking, ought to be ashamed of himself for not attending to my letter denouncing him about Sotheby's MS. The old man is a gentleman, and is entitled either to receive his manuscript back instantly (it is the only copy) or a promise that it is to be printed in the next number of 'Maga'—for which purpose I understand Wilson to have *solicited* it. Some attention to the common laws of politeness would do no harm. Nothing more on this subject from me.

By the bye, Murray has had a grand affair. The Master of the Mint, Harris, told the Duke yesterday that the last article in the 'Quarterly,' just published, had produced a panic among the Jews, and sunk Stocks 2 per cent. The Dictator sent for Croker and Barrow to the Cabinet Council and rowed them. They sent for Murray and rowed him, and then up came the Emperor to row me. I took it all very cool: he had been consulted quite at leisure beforehand. God knows how this may end—I care not.

J. G. Lockhart to W. Blackwood.

December 28, 1830.

I was asked to deliver a message to you, and I agreed to do so—not doubting in the least what your answer would be, and never having dropped a hint that I doubted it. You and I have seen too much of the *outs* in the character of *ins* to be easily seduced by such persons. I have for the 'Q. R.' resisted giving the smallest pledge to any Minister (except indeed to the Duke of Wellington *on his first coming in*), and nothing shall ever induce me to put faith in any Minister's professions again. We are fighting the same battle, though in somewhat

different methods, perhaps: and if, as I think it likely, the Grey Reform Bill will ere long compel us both to be apparently acting in concert with Peel and the Duke of W., I am sure we shall both think the alliance is likely to be one of brief endurance. The great Radical blunder of the Currency, &c., will remain.

From all I can gather, there is a very angry feud going on between the Grey section of the Cabinet and the Althorp one. Sir H. Parnell and his set mean to declare themselves forthwith in opposition in consequence of the Irish jobs, and this Deanery given so disgracefully to the Premier's brother. Lord Althorp is a fat outspoken grazier, and can't help babbling everything. He has let out that they mean to give no compensation to the lords of the English rotten boroughs (all of which are to be disfranchised by the bill), or the existing country voters in Scotland, who are to enjoy the franchise henceforth, it seems, in common with any owner of £10 annual rent in *land* or *house*. These propositions will unite all the Scotch gentry and most of the English boroughmongers against the Government, and we shall see the issue.

Thus we are brought to the brink of a crisis by the act of the ultra Tories in turning out the Duke. Of this there can be no doubt: he feels it, and they, I *believe*, repent it almost to a man. They did not foresee the terrible risks of this reform as a Cabinet proposition. They gratified their just resentment at the deep hazard of everything. Such is my view of the case, such is Southey's, such is Sadler's, such is Lord Chandos's. We are among the breakers; let us see how much we can save.

It is well sometimes to see the dismal prognostications with which even wise men of that period regard the changes under which even the oldest among us have grown up, in complete unconsciousness of any shipwreck. We too in our turn are often tempted to indulge in the vaticinations of alarm and woe, which it is an encouragement to the general mind to believe may turn out quite as excessive.

Lockhart was again busy with a 'Noctes' as late

as Sept. 2, 1831. He seems to have learned in London the important art of dating his letters, and writes at that date from Chiefswood, where he was partly enjoying his holiday and partly waiting upon the darkened days of his illustrious neighbour and father-in-law — not well himself and full of apprehensions :—

J. G. Lockhart to W. Blackwood.

Sir W. S. seems to have fixed on quitting Scotland for Naples about the first of October, and I suppose we shall be taking wing for London about the same time. The six or eight months during which we shall be absent from the glen here—what may they not bring forth? Who can guess or dream? I give all anticipation to the winds.

Let me know if the 'Noctes' is liked. By-and-by you shall have another, but not till I have seen London again, I think.

In his next letter there is much banter of Hogg, from some of whose verses Lockhart with the editorial impulse docks eight lines, in which some unpleasant reference had evidently been made to a local potentate :—

Hogg is mad to insult such a family, so near, and who have been on occasions kind to him, and in case of need would be ready to uphold him. You didn't know who was meant,[1] I am sure. The poem has much of good and much of abominable, like most of the pig's. I have never heard of Wilson except once in a letter from Hamilton. It is capital to hear Wordsworth on him — only inferior to the Poet on *himself*, though in rather a different vein.

Don't let Hogg dream I would have anything to do with his edition of Novels. Even if there were nothing else, I have not time for such a thing. It is quite impossible. "None but himself could be his editor."

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[1] The Scotts of Harden were the family referred to.

"Perhaps my last of Chiefswood," he adds sadly at the end of this letter, which is dated 22nd September 1831. It is at least the last of the Blackwood letters dated from that spot so full of memories, the joyful little house which "the Sheriff" had been wont to rouse from its morning quiet by the happy barks and gambols of his careering dogs, and his own kind shout of good morrow. Now the light was darkened, and the cheerful visitor came no more.

And here is the brief and dignified record of what might have been a bitter quarrel. Something had been said in the 'Quarterly' concerning Hogg which had seemed to Wilson and Blackwood a censure upon the Professor and the Magazine; while Wilson on his side had given utterance, in the casual incidental way in which he often delivered the most savage blows, to some unpardonable strictures upon Scott, specially ungracious at the moment. Lockhart makes his own apology and explanation very generously, while indicating the much harsher offence on the other side:—

I can't let your letter go without expressing my concern that what was said in the 'Q. R.' should have given either you or the Professor any real uneasiness. I was working at the time for Hogg with the wigs of the Royal Society of Literature, and finding the dramatic[1] character in my way at every turn, wrote that sentence simply, and merely in reference to his interests, and without the least wish to escape from any share of the blame. I described Hogg as I saw him a few days before I left Scotland in October, at Altrive, wet, weary, and melancholy. Before the review appeared he, to be sure, had contrived to

[1] No doubt the introduction of the Shepherd in the 'Noctes,' where so many things were put into his mouth which, as he bitterly complains, he never said, though at the same time it covered him with robes of poetic glory to which he had as little right.

make my statement look absurd enough by the reprint of his songs. After that I am dumb.

As to Sir W. S., I shall just tell you one fact. Aristophanes Mitchell, one of 'Maga's' staunchest admirers, wrote to me that he had given up taking her in, and would never again look at her, solely in consequence of what appeared in one of the 'Noctes' about Sir Walter, whom he never saw. If a stranger feels like this, what must friends have done. There is no need to tell me that my friend meant no harm. I know him too well even to have dreamt of that. But rashness may, and sometimes does, produce serious mischief between friends, and I dreaded the effect in the present broken condition of Sir W.'s health and spirits. And now let there be no angry recollection between us. I am sure nothing of the kind will ever be done again in 'Maga'; and I tried, in as far as she was concerned, to make up for my little skit by a compliment to the 'Noctes' in the next number of the 'Quarterly.'

Here, however, is a bit of denunciation in the old slashing tone, aimed at a perfectly legitimate opponent and leader of the opposite side; against whom—since the days when it was little more than a youthful *bicker*, and every long-armed lad threw the most stinging ball he could carry from the Blackwood side to all others—it had been the most natural thing in the world to volley every projectile that came to hand. But Lord Brougham was, throughout his career, one of the men whom nobody loved, and every harsh thing seemed natural when said of him—a painful but probably never quite undeserved fate. The occasion was the introduction of the Reform Bill:—

J. G. Lockhart to W. Blackwood.

Oct. 8, 1831.

Brougham's speech was four hours long: the greater part dull, cold, heavy, and tautologous to a *wonder:* insolent to intolerability in the placarding of *characters* on all persons he

had or found occasion to mention, false to his party, and basely crawling to the Duke of Wellington—the whole a piece of treason under a splash of bravado. The impostor *knelt* at the end. Lord Wynford's speech was very excellent, the most logical on the whole. Lord Lyndhurst was worse used by the Whigs than any speaker ever was by any party in my presence. The effort of the Archbishop was grand, and indeed the whole scene was most noble and satisfactory. Not a soul in the streets; and, to-day, everything as dull as possible.

The Ministerialists, in the Commons, will move on Monday or Tuesday an address to the King, on the part of Lord Grey. At the same moment Lord Harrowby will be opening his views of what a reform should be in the Lords. This last is good news.

We will conclude these quotations by a very interesting letter in respect to the immediate arrangements, and commotion of the public mind after the death of Sir Walter Scott. It is by no means the end of the correspondence, though we find little more preserved of the portion addressed to William Blackwood, except some affecting letters written very shortly before his death, which shall be quoted in their time. The friendship was continued with the sons, and lasted as long as Lockhart lived. It was his hand that prepared the two pages of stately and sorrowful record which were devoted to its founder in the pages of 'Maga,' and he remained always the faithful friend and helper, when aid was necessary, of the name which had so greatly influenced his youth.

J. G. Lockhart to W. Blackwood.

LONDON, *3rd November* 1832.

I have been and continue to be daily and hourly occupied with the affairs of the late Sir W. Scott, and can hardly

command time even for a short note at this moment. My Magazine has arrived safe, which I fear all have not done, and the No. is very good—especially Charlemagne—the Rabbins—the working of the bill in Scotland, and the abuse of Colman, which *refreshed* me. I am afraid you must give me another month's law—I promise a 'Noctes' for Xmas—let Wilson keep up the ball till then.

I know not what is to be the upshot of all these subscriptions. The folk here say it is a joke to be rearing monuments in various places, while, if the Major should die to-morrow, Charles would inherit Abbotsford *at the best* without a shilling to keep it up. They are for getting Walter to sell them his liferent, and take the whole back as a gift, with the obligation and entail, house, land, and library, in terms of his father's designation—and but for the fear of interfering with our dealings with the creditors they would ere now have done something publicly. They meet next Friday, at Bridgewater House, the Marquis of Stafford in the chair, in the hope of having by that time exact information as to the extent of the claims of those creditors who object to the Executors' proposal—and I share the hopes that such information may then be at their command. Sir Coutts Trotter, Croker, &c., &c., are sanguine enough, and believe that £50,000, a fair price for Abbotsford, will be easily raised. I think they are *wild* in these views; but as my brother-in-law has no objection to their proceedings (which he considers as moved entirely by the wish to make Abbotsford a lasting monument of his father's name and taste), and as, however the result may fall short of their hopes, it must *pro tanto* relieve him—I have nothing to do but to wait in patience. If the Edinburgh people did well, they would put a statue where Castle Street cuts Princes Street, with the Castle-rock for a background; or they would make a huge Homeric *Cairn* on Arthur's Seat—a land and sea mark—and throw the rest, if anything, of their funds into the hands of the Bridgewater House Committee. But whether it is possible for them to do this now, I don't know. I consider it as disgusting to be putting Scott on a par with Dugald Stewart, Playfair, and so forth in the *temple line*. Meantime this is *private* to you and the Professor, until affairs have progressed a little further. As the literary

property is tied up until, *inter alia*, the encumbrances of £10,000 on the estate of Abbotsford, £5000 on the Library, are paid off, to release the Major of these would of course be advancing the time when the other children may expect to profit at all by the sale of the works.

Sir W.'s will has an article expressly leaving the direction of publication to Cadell!

Many letters passed, and there was much and constant communication between the younger Blackwoods and their father's old friend in after-years, which will be referred to from time to time. But we may take from these after-days a little note addressed to John Blackwood, which rounds off this story with an affecting touch of old kindness. It was written at the very end of Lockhart's life in the year 1853:—

DEAR B.,—If you think the enclosed worth a page any time, they are at the service of 'Maga,' from her very old servant, now released from all service, J. G. L.

That gay and careless yet powerful service had lasted, with intermissions, for more than thirty-five years, the length of a generation. The Blackwood of old was dead, and most of the cheerful companions: the lively, brilliant, restless spirit was broken with sorrow and trouble. Not very many months after he was indeed to be wholly relieved from all service. It is with a tender remembrance of Lockhart that we thus close the record, by his last affectionate expression of feeling to the old 'Maga' of the days that were no more.

CHAPTER VI.

CHRISTOPHER NORTH.

A DESCENDANT OF MONTROSE — ELECTION TO THE MORAL PHILOSOPHY CHAIR—FIRST CONNECTION WITH 'MAGA'—AN ATTACK ON COLERIDGE — CHARLES LLOYD'S UNFORTUNATE POEM — A PUBLISHER'S INJURED AFFECTIONS — A SENSITIVE CRITIC — ONSLAUGHT ON THE "MAN OF FEELING" — THE ETHICS OF REVIEWING — LEIGH HUNT'S THREATENED LIBEL—THE PUBLISHER VISITS ELLERAY—WORDSWORTH ASSAULTED IN THE 'NOCTES'—AN INDIGNANT "JACKASS"—THE GIANT UNNERVED—AN AMPLE APOLOGY FOR A BAD JOKE — AN AUTHOR'S GOOD RESOLUTIONS — SENTIMENTAL PASSAGES BETWEEN THE PROFESSOR AND THE PUBLISHER — "NOT EDITOR BUT FRIEND" — MORE SENTIMENT — MRS HEMANS—THOMAS AIRD—RECOLLECTIONS OF A VISIT TO THE PROFESSOR.

It is doubtful which of the two young men, whose eager co-operation and delighted seizure upon an instrument as new as it was effective with which to move the world gave Blackwood's project immediate force and energy, was the more important to that great undertaking and to himself. It is evident, however, that at the first start it was Lockhart who was more immediately prominent, though Wilson soon became the chief influence and more constant worker, —at once the prop and the plague, as will be seen, of Magazine and publisher. Though he was the very impersonation of irregularity, careless prodigality of strength, and want of system, he had the great

advantage of remaining on the spot and continuing in the same circle of adherents and friends, and was thus a more prevailing presence than his more exact and less accidental comrade and coadjutor. They were both, when they began the work of life, as little systematic, as careless of all rule, as can be conceived. It was the joy and glory of youth in those days to win its honours and attain its effects with almost an affectation of idleness and indifference to any serious motive. I do not know whether there was so much more force of impulse and energy in the generation that this was the expression of a natural tendency or the sign of their special stage of development. I am free to confess that to account for it in this way seems to me the mere jargon of science applied to matters with which it has little to do. And we may admit that there is still a prejudice in the youthful mind in favour of prizes lightly won, and of the young hero who never seems to work, yet gaily gains the reward of work by some dazzling impossibility which delights his companions. Alas! I fear that it is now his stupid companions, the comrades of his pleasures, who are delighted; and that virtuous youth, to which the labour is the great thing, and the reward more or less professedly indifferent if not given as the recompense of struggle and effort, is of quite another way of thinking.

But in those days there was no perpetual and ever-repeated ordeal of examinations, and perhaps there was a certain advantage in the fact that brilliant natural faculties sometimes won the day over that perseverance and steadfast plodding which is our reformed ideal nowadays. Wilson was one of the most

marked examples of that beginning-of-the-century method. Everybody saw him at play. He was the most vigorous athlete, the most reckless wanderer, ever ready for frolic or fight—and rarely or never was he seen at work: nevertheless he was publicly complimented when he left Oxford, and perhaps during the course of his literary life there was no one more brilliant or more appreciated or more productive, though those who knew him best were continually provoked by what appeared his carelessness and indolence, and were convinced, even at the height of labours which were never believed in, because it was his whim to undervalue them, that any excuse was sufficient to induce him to shirk work and cast duty aside. In everything he had to do, he did more than other men. When his companions took a decorous ramble by coach or carriage, he tramped with his knapsack, burying himself in Border valleys or among the Highland glens. He sought adventure everywhere by flood or field. He idled, talked, jested, wasted his time, did everything but work; yet somehow seldom, in his early life at least, failed in the great demands made upon him, and produced a whole literature of that criticism of life which we have remarked as the grand characteristic of his compositions and those of his friend—not a literature, perhaps, which has lasted, or is likely to last except in brilliant fragments, but one which inspired and delighted his age, and made his generation acquainted with a larger view and widened conception of things intellectual and moral, a scorn of the poor and paltry, a generous appreciation of the neglected. The 'Noctes' of Blackwood, which finally fell into his hands after the joint manipulation

of several others, was a storeroom of wisdom and of wit, of sport and earnest, of the gravest discussions and the gayest commentaries, and had a large, unacknowledged, perhaps uncomprehended, share in the mental training of our fathers. It is a little humbling to reflect that these fathers, whom we inevitably feel less wise than ourselves, often knew a great deal more than we do, and had read more—just as we are conscious that we have a better acquaintance with the literature of our own country than the latest generation, which prides itself on reading nothing. We do not hesitate to say that the nation's power of expressing itself, its faculty of judging between the bad and good, or the not-so-bad and good-enough, were considerably affected by the lively dialogue, the fine criticism, and beautiful descriptions, of that famous literary commentary on contemporary life.

John Wilson was born in 1785, the son of a wealthy manufacturer in Paisley, though not without gentle blood on his mother's side. We are told by his daughter, Mrs Gordon, that the blood of the gallant and noble Montrose was in his veins,—a potent element, delightful to contemplate, though he never made any boast of it so far as we are aware—a singular, nay, almost an unkindly omission, for such an ancestor as Montrose was a thing which it was a duty to brag of. He was a son of wealth, trained in luxury, one of the ostentatiously superior class of gentleman-commoners, no longer existing—at Magdalen College, Oxford, and set out in life as the possessor of a comfortable fortune. But the favourites of heaven generally manage early to shake off by hook or by crook that unnecessary appendage. He lost his money in

1815, and on that event gave up his idle and enjoyable life of love, poetry, and athletic amusement in the Lake Country, and came to Edinburgh, already a married man, with young children to provide for, to work for his living, not very well knowing how. He was called to the Scottish bar, but there was so little meaning in that ceremonial in his case that he is said, when he found by chance a brief on his table, to have contemplated it with whimsical alarm, wondering what the devil he was to do with it! He soon found something, however, to do with his leisure, or rather with that mysterious and inappreciable portion of his time in which he did his work. It must be added that there never seems to have been anything like poverty, or the usual struggle for life common to ruined men, in his experience at this early period. He came to Edinburgh, not to any restricted existence, but to his mother's ample and comfortable house; and was evidently able to wait without any great strain until occupation and income came. In 1817, as has been already told, he and Lockhart—by that time his inseparable friend and companion, much younger in years but always more mature in soul—flung themselves into the creation of 'Blackwood's Magazine,' in which both found the most congenial work, and the opportunity for which both were unconsciously waiting. Its first effect was certainly anything but a conciliatory one upon the temper of the town or its authorities, and it is with a sense of courage almost as reckless as if the bailies of Edinburgh had been so many Oxford bargees (extinct as adversaries, and known no more to the less muscular

undergraduate nowadays), that we find Wilson, only three years after he had set the Forth aflame, presenting himself for the suffrages of these said bailies as a candidate for the Professorship of Moral Philosophy in the University—the appointment to which, as to most of the other chairs, by some curious arrangement descending from the days when Edinburgh burgesses were a very important part of every movement, the civic authorities held in their hands. This fact made every such selection more or less a matter of politics, the Whigs carrying their candidate when Whiggery was in the ascendant, the Tories theirs when their day came round.

There could not, however, be a more triumphant answer to the complaints and remonstrances of Mr Murray of Albemarle Street and others, as to the personalities which were to ruin the Magazine, than the success of Wilson on this occasion. Perhaps the Southern wit will say that it required a joke as wild and riotous as that of the Chaldee Manuscript to penetrate the Scottish understanding: at all events, it is clear that it was taken in no such ill part as the outer world imagined. No doubt there was much opposition to Wilson's candidature, but that was chiefly on personal, and, indeed, on religious, grounds, —many accusations of profanity quite unproved, and some of reckless living, having been brought against him. Scott himself took an active part in the canvass, writing to the Lord Provost in defence of Wilson's character, and sparing no pains to bring the contest to a successful issue. But it did come to a successful issue; and at the very moment when,

according to the London journalist, the "outrages" of the "miscreants" of Blackwood had "desolated society in Edinburgh," one of them was elected to a chair in "The College," that time-honoured institution which holds so important a part in the life of the metropolis of Scotland.

No doubt it will be said that every influence except the most legitimate one of fitness for the post was brought to bear on the election, and that it was chiefly a Tory triumph. But, at the same time, Wilson's testimonials were unanswerable. They were lyrical, a series of effusions, in which high-flying Oxford sang the praises of a kind of being unknown to it in any other specimen,—a Norse-god of heroic genius as well as person, with coruscations of northern lights about him which dazzled all sober eyes. And Scott upheld his standard with a vigorous and thoroughgoing support, pledging himself for the young man's character, powers, religious opinions, domestic amiability, with a force which left no man a word to say. Wilson's religious opinions were, like those of all his class—especially, perhaps, on the Tory side — chiefly distinguished by a reverential respect for doctrines, observances, and, within certain limits, of clergymen, which very often involved a desire to hear no more about them than was necessary, but which held doubt or criticism on such subjects ungentlemanly and in the worst taste, and infidelity as a greater offence against all the principles of society than even vice. It is difficult in the present day to understand the junction of this profound and constantly expressed reverence with a profane wit which stuck at nothing: as it is also difficult to understand

the ease and simplicity of the admission to his wife of "I fear I did not go to bed sober," with the facts of a life of great domestic regularity and propriety; but it was not so difficult in those days, when men's peccadilloes were regarded with an indulgent eye so long as their principles were sound and their demeanour what it ought to be. We remember that, among the grave objections made to Wilson during the contest, the singing of a certain song in the lingering and diminished party which carried on its revels into the small hours after some public dinner, from which the sober seniors had gone home hours before, was discussed before the respectable bailies, making their hair stand on end. It is needless to add that the immense potations of Ambrose's were at all times fictitious: this will be already apparent from the fact, which the reader has seen, that the famous 'Noctes' came from the study at Chiefswood, in the supreme silence of the country, as often, at least at first, as from any jovial centre where they might have been otherwise inspired.

We labour under the same difficulty in respect to Wilson's correspondence with Mr Blackwood as we have already experienced in that of Lockhart—a complete absence of dates, reducing us in many cases to the difficult process of putting together a number of scraps, not so much for any importance in themselves, as to illustrate—which is our chief object—the nature of the intercourse between him and Blackwood. There are, however, at the beginning of the correspondence a few letters which we can place in their proper position, and which show how early the connection was formed, with what enthusiasm on one side and eager response

on the other. The first I find was written in the dark days of Pringle and Cleghorn, before the real 'Maga' had begun. It is addressed to Wilson at a Highland address, while he was absent on one of his many sporting expeditions, and is dated—

EDINBURGH, 2*nd August* 1817.

W. Blackwood to J. Wilson.

Allow me to offer you my warmest thanks and congratulations for your most interesting packet. I got it safe by this day's coach. Mr and Mrs Robert [Wilson?] called just as I opened it. They are equally with me in raptures with your articles and the beautiful little poems. How striking you have made the Highland Glen! and what a delightful and new turn you give to the hackneyed wish which all express on being pleased with a particular spot! The widowed mother is most affecting; but what delights me most in your poetry is the heartfelt glow of religious and moral feeling with which you enrich it. The Sonnet is uncommonly good, but does not affect me like the other two. I hope you will pardon me for indulging so much *ultra crepidam.*

I have only had time to read the two Reviews very hurriedly. They are capital, and, so far as I can judge from a hasty glance, to the full as interesting as your former ones. I can give them no higher praise. I hope you have by this time received the letter I wrote on Saturday last, and the parcel which I forwarded to you by same post, addressed to you at Captain Harden's. The parcel contained Lord Byron's 'Lament of Tasso'; Frere's 'Prospectus,' &c.; Coleridge's 'Leaves' and his 'Biographia Literaria.'

After what I have now received from you, you must think me a very importunate person to be asking more. I hope, however, you will have occasional moments of leisure which you will gratify all your friends by filling up as you have done already. To speak more selfishly, as it may be considered, it will be of the last importance to me that you go on to assist me, as without your help I do not expect to make No. 6 good for anything,

and this would be perfectly ruinous to me. I have now positively determined to go on with a Magazine, were it on no other account than that these fellows, the Crafty and his new and most honourable allies, are triumphing over my sinking before them. But laying this wholly out of the question, I am now urged to go on by all my friends, and promised every kind of support. I would give anything almost to have you here just now to consult with, and to tell you a number of things which I have casually learnt lately with regard to the manner in which P. and Cleghorn have behaved in the business. . . . I have no doubt they will be besieging you for your assistance. I need not say how much I would regret your going over to the enemy's camp. I will not attempt to urge you to favour me with your support. All I shall say is, that I feel indebted to you for what you have already done more than I can express, and that I flatter myself you will find my publication to the full as respectable as the other. I hope, when you come to know, you will be fully satisfied of this.

This letter found Wilson about the trout-streams in his holiday, tramping in the wet over moss and heather, carrying at one time, apparently in his knapsack, on his Herculean shoulders, "about a dozen heavy books." This was in preparation for the first number of the new issue. It gives a curious glimpse into the manner in which articles could be composed in these robust days :—

John Wilson to W. Blackwood.

I received the packet addressed to me at Captain Harden's on my arrival at Braemar, and found much amusement therefrom on two rainy days which I was obliged to pass there. It contained Coleridge's Life and poems, Frere's poem, and the 'Lament of Tasso.' I carried them and my other books with me to Grantown on the Spey, where a calamity, if I may use such a word, befell me. I had written an account of Coleridge's

Life and a review of the 'Lament,' which I crammed into my pocket; and during my ascent to the top of Cairngorm they must have fallen out, for on returning to Grantown at night they were gone and irretrievably lost. This was certainly provoking, especially as it will be out of my power to do anything till I return to Edinburgh. I found my luggage insupportably heavy, and therefore packed up all my books, amounting to more than a dozen heavy volumes, and sent them off to Edinburgh. I am now able to walk with some comfort, which before was not the case. I expect to be in Edinburgh by the 4th or 5th of September. What it may be in my power to do for your sixth number shall be done, and if I have three or four days in Edinburgh I can do something. But tumbled about as I am now, I have no heart to do anything — especially after losing the two best articles I had written, and which I can never rewrite. I will, notwithstanding, try to say a few words on the 'Lament,' and, if possible, make a leading article of Coleridge: only you will see how difficult it is for me to promise. Frere's verses are most facetious and entertaining, but of their meaning I have no comprehension. I know not whether they are politically, theologically, or poetically critical: if you have a key tell me. For your next number get Thomas Gray's Life by Graham, which is really very good. No doubt Senex will give you something. My brother James should bestir himself, so that, with the addition of some little scientific matter from Brewster or his friends, something odd from Riddell, &c., &c., why may not a tolerable number be made out? I will, if possible, give you "Coleridge," "Defence of Wordsworth," "Account of Marlow's Edward II.," "Lament of Tasso," another short review of "Mrs Spence," and "Supposed Contents of M'Cormick."

I think you are right in going on with a Magazine. With respect to myself, you know that I am not to be depended upon. But if you do go on, I shall now and then, when the spirit compels, lend a hand. You should have in No. 6 an account of Kemble's leaving the stage, some critique on him, which J. Ballantyne could do, and Campbell's verses.

With such calm did the young man contemplate the

work which was to bring him the chief successes of his life. But the Chaldee Manuscript had not as yet been thought of, and it was that wild onslaught which excited the brotherhood and woke them to full exercise of their powers. We should have been glad not to have the assurance thus conveyed that the article on Coleridge—a very much greater offence against public morality and humanity—was Wilson's doing. Perhaps the lost article, which dropped out of his careless pocket on the slopes of Cairngorm, was written in a better spirit, and the loss of it lent bitterness to the after-writing. Anyhow, the offence of the Chaldee Manuscript was as nothing in comparison to this review, with which, we are sad to say, 'Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine' began.

In the years immediately following there is little correspondence, presumably because of the close personal intercourse between author and publisher. The following letter was evidently written in the interest of one of the feebler members of that Lake School which Wilson alternately assailed and caressed. The reader will probably feel that it carries sympathy for one friend too courageously to the debit of another:—

John Wilson to W. Blackwood.

I enclose for your perusal a letter from Mr Lloyd. I feel so extremely for him, knowing his character and all the circumstances of his life, that I would not for any consideration give him pain, which might produce fatal effects upon him.

When I first wrote to him about his Tragedy I stated positively that it would be inserted at ten guineas per sheet, as I did not doubt it would be worth it. You see what his feeling about it is. With respect to the Tragedy or Drama I have not read it; but it cannot, heavy as it may be, but be exceedingly

clever in many respects—that is certain. And therefore it may not, on the whole, injure the Magazine, indeed it may benefit it, although few read it. I feel myself, therefore, as you will see, *obliged,* by the strongest motives, to request that it may be published in the Magazine. I have no doubt that otherwise Mr L. would be affected mentally and miserably.

Of course it cannot go into this number; but part of it next, and so on till it is finished. It will take four numbers of about eight pages each, as I conceive. I wish, therefore, that you would send Mr L. an order for twenty guineas, being one-half, and permission to draw upon you for the rest at six months: or perhaps the twenty guineas will do at present without the other. I shall write to him by this day's post, and if you agree with me on the necessity of this, I can enclose the order for £21 in my letter. I see no way of avoiding this. I cannot lend him money without inserting the Tragedy. That would make him worse than anything.

This would seem a curious argument nowadays for inserting so solemn a matter as a tragedy in a periodical; but men's hearts were softer, and their ways less rigid, perhaps less conventional, in the beginning of the century. The Lloyd referred to was, no doubt, Charles Lloyd, one of the brotherhood of the Lakes, an unlucky mortal astray among the band of the Immortals, and paying dearly for that privilege. Mr Blackwood's reply to this, addressed to the unfortunate author, is decisive enough. "The gentleman who at present conducts this department" is a very transparent mystery, seeing that what influence Wilson had was chiefly in the region of poetry.

W. Blackwood to C. Lloyd, London.

EDIN., 10 *Oct.* 1820.

He [Mr Wilson] has requested me as a favour done to himself to send you twenty guineas for your Tragedy, which it seems to me, if inserted in the Magazine, will occupy about two

sheets. Mr Wilson has informed me that he had ventured to tell you that such was the rate at which communications to the work were paid. The gentleman, however, who at present conducts this department of the Magazine follows his own ideas and his own selection of articles, and not even a request of Mr Wilson's, much as we are beholden to him, will induce him to swerve from his arrangement. I may mention, however, that your Drama seems to him not to be well adapted for a periodical work, and that its interest is more for the metaphysical than general reader, and that even that interest is likely to be impaired by the necessary publication of the Drama piecemeal.

To show you, however, how much I am disposed to act liberally towards any literary man, and more particularly towards any friend of Mr Wilson's, I now send you an order on Cadell & Davies for twenty guineas, and should the Tragedy be ultimately deemed, with all its merits, not adapted to the peculiar nature of the Magazine, the MS. will be returned to you, and I hope you will favour us at some other time with such communications as may supply its place.

The poem was eventually returned to the author "in a coach parcel."

It is seldom, however, that the boundless faith which the writers had in their publisher is checked in this summary way. He was very ready in general to receive their recommendations, and though the rate of remuneration at this period cannot be said to be high, invariably eager to secure a new contributor with ready cheques and cordial welcome.

The perfect intimacy of persons in close and daily communication with each other, and the fact that in most cases the Magazine and its articles are the prevailing subject of these flying scraps of letters, detract considerably from the interest of the correspondence; but we cannot better show how warm and constant

the intercourse was, and what were the vicissitudes to which it was subject, than by quoting the following broken fragment, without beginning or end, in which there is a moan of injured affection not at all of the kind which has been supposed to be possible between author and publisher. Grub Street never knew any such relationship as this of which Mr Blackwood sadly records the momentary breach, but which it is evident was only the rent of a moment, immediately brought together again :—

W. Blackwood to Professor Wilson.

May 14, 1821.

I had just come from my solitary meal at Ambrose's, when the pleasure of your short letter—short as it is—raised my spirits. It is not the not receiving articles that has depressed me, but it has been the feeling of being, as it were, left to myself, and no one caring for me.

21*st May.*

I had written the above this day se'nnight, and intended to have said something more, but I felt it too much for me, and put it into my pocket, where it has lain ever since. How to account for your conduct I know not, and you mistake my feelings if you suppose that it is the not receiving your and Mr Lockhart's promised support to the Magazine that has vexed me. What I feel hurt at is, that after devoting my every thought and energy to whatever I conceived would be gratifying or useful to you, and never for a moment thinking of myself, you should act with this kind of indifference, so completely foreign to your usual warm-heartedness. My confidence in your friendship is the only thing that has borne me up in many difficulties, and feeling strongly that I have ever deserved it, I need not say how painful it is to me.

This letter balances, with its note of sentiment, the many wails of wounded friendship which came from Wilson's capacious bosom in after-days.

In 1822 there was published Wilson's first work in prose, 'The Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life,' a work exceedingly popular at the time, though perhaps giving too sentimental and superlative a view of peasant life in Scotland or anywhere else. There are several highly amusing letters upon this publication and the criticisms it called forth, which we may quote as highly characteristic of the man. No tyro could have been more anxious, more excited, than he who had dealt death and wounds round him with so much *gaieté du cœur*. He expected a review from Lockhart, which he writes from the country to say he did not wish to see before it was published. "I wish to swallow it in one lump. You have no idea how sweet flattery is in the country. My appetite for it even in a town is steady, if not voracious: here, I verily believe I could bolt anything." It does not seem, however, that his hopes of flattery were satisfied. The book was given for review to Henry Mackenzie, the now very old head and patron of literature in Edinburgh, the Man of Feeling, long since reconciled to the Magazine, and whose approval was supposed to be the highest gratification to which any writer could aspire. Mr Blackwood thanks the old gentleman effusively for his review of Galt; but Wilson evidently was very far from being of this opinion, and his reply to Mackenzie's criticism is so tremendous in its wrath, and it is so seldom that an author's remonstrance is made visible to the public, that though the letter is somewhat long, we venture to give it entire. It is dated "Kelso, Friday." The date was probably sometime in May 1822, and begins by an announcement that he has "read over the

sheets of 'Maga' with the greatest pleasure," and that the number will be "most lively and amusing."

John Wilson to W. Blackwood.

I consider old M. to be the greatest nuisance that ever infested any Magazine. His review of Galt's 'Annals' was poor and worthless: that of 'Adam Blair' still worse: and this of 'Lights and Shadows' the most despicable and foolish of all. His remarks on 'Adam Blair' did the book no good, but much harm with dull stupid people, and this wretched article cannot fail to do the same to a greater degree. I cannot express my disgust with it. He damns the book at once by comparing it with Gessner: for he draws a most degrading character (falsely, I presume) of that writer, and then says that my book is "a close imitation of it." Gessner's 'Idylls' are syrupy, it seems, and only fit for young sentimentalists who have never looked into the mirror of nature; and of him I am said to be a close imitator. The Colonel himself could not have told a baser lie, although from baser motives—those of the old dotard being simply self-conceit and sheer incapacity. Whatever he may bring himself to say afterwards, this is his idea of the book published to the world, that it is on the whole a syrupy dish for young sentimentalists,—the very thing which might be said by some malignant Idiot. Of Gessner I never read one syllable—nor indeed ever saw a volume of his even lying on the table. But from what I have heard of him I believe, first, that he has great merit; secondly, that he is unlike in all points to me, J. W. What he says about 'Idylls' shows ignorance; and his non-acquaintance with the origin of the term blue-stocking is altogether incomprehensible. In short, all this is a dull, vile falsehood, and one that cannot fail of being got by heart by thousands, and of injuring the book. The next paragraph is on the whole worse. "Rural images are always pleasing" is a clever way of talking of the scenery in the volume—shepherds are "Arcadian," the Lights and Shadows are not Scottish, it seems. And then his own attempts at description in this paragraph, what miserable drivelling! In the third paragraph it is said that the morality is pure, it seems, but still something

wrong with it. What he says of the minister's widow is most execrable,—"never indulges it beyond civility and attention to her friends"!!!! Oh Moses! The Covenanter's marriage-day nearly happened; that is, a young man betrothed to a young woman was dragged out of his concealment in her father's house and shot by soldiers. It is not German, but intensely Scottish. The circumstances of the soldiers are misstated by Mackenzie. In sixth paragraph he says the scenery, though professedly Scots, is not always true to this profession of its locality. I say it is. Where is it not? It seems "some passages" are an exception to this condemnation. That is lucky. In paragraph seventh he indulges in a lie, and it is a lie that ought to be pointed out to the old critic. He says, "We are sorry that the *concluding stroke of the author's pencil* should have spoiled this solemn picture." That is the picture of a wild, furious, snow-stormy night. And then he quotes a passage about diamonds and dew-drops. Now, would you believe it, the said passage of the milliner is not there at all. It occurs at the top of page 116, and is the finishing stroke to a description of youth, beauty, and happiness. Indeed had it been otherwise I must have lost my senses. I request you to read the passages 115 and 116 in the snow-storm, and you will see that the old captious body has been playing a trick to make a criticism. The passage as I have written it is beyond the literary power of any milliner's girl, and the old dotard should be told that he has grossly and falsely misquoted it, for a despicable purpose. He then says that this passage of the milliner is copied and spoiled from Thomson; for he cannot swear that the snow-storm in general is. Now, I lay my ears nothing like it *can* be in Thomson. Nor is there, except the snow, and even that is very different, one single point of resemblance, but all points of utter dissimilitude, between my child saved from death and his farmer family wrapt up in a greatcoat. This is foolish and false and disgusting. Lastly, my abhorrence of "lace and embroideries" is as great and far greater than ever his was. In short, the whole article is loathsome, and gives me and Mrs W. the utmost disgust. It is sickening to see it in the Magazine, and utterly destroys the pleasure which Mr L.'s article would

otherwise give me. It is not, as you well know, that I can possibly be such an ass as to dislike criticism. But this is mere drivelling falsehood and misrepresentation—calculated to injure the book, I declare, even in my own eyes, and to do it the greatest injury with the public. It is the most sickening dose of mawkish misrepresentation I ever read.

The article which filled Wilson (and Mrs W.) with such disgust and resentment never appeared in the Magazine—probably it was only in proof that he read it: and this angry remonstrance caused its being replaced by a laudatory review in June 1822. It is edifying, however, to perceive how little the critic liked the methods which he himself used so freely. The murmurs of the passing storm echo still, though much softened and mingled with the usual business of the Magazine, in the following letter. Old M. is forgotten; the usual circle comes into sight again; and the matter discussed is a critical letter[1] on Mr Blackwood's books in general, attributed to that great authority Mr Croker, with interpolations from the ubiquitous Maginn, by this time mixed up with everything that was going on:—

John Wilson to W. Blackwood.

KELSO, *Wednesday.*

You must have observed that I am excessively sore and silly on the subject of 'Lights and Shadows.' I do not wish it cut up or greatly sneered at in your Magazine. Probably I shall have quite enough of that in good time elsewhere. I do not object, however, to a nice little eulogistic touch of censure now and then, but I must always do these with my own hand. As to the Doctor's addition, I object to it, first, that it is most brutal; secondly, stupidish; and thirdly, quite unlike in style and sentiment to Croker's letter. These are three good reasons,

[1] In 'Maga,' July 1822.

and let the Doctor know them. Croker praises the 'Lights and Shadows,' it is true; but it is because he likes the book rather: he abuses 'Pen Owen,' partly because he thinks it deserves abuse, and partly for other reasons which you know: and he abuses Galt because he hates and also despises him. Mr L. has no business to get a calumniator to abuse my works, and tell him so from me, let the consequences be what they will. Firstly, Croker's letter ought for the joke's sake to be printed just as it is, and I do not think seriously he would like to see it interpolated. It certainly is his.

I do not know whether my letter to Philomag is at all good. The Doctor or Mr L. may improve it by sharp and ingenious touches if they will. But let them not meddle with 'Lights and Shadows' at their peril. The propriety of damning all your own books is, I think, questionable. Were I in Galt's situation I should be extremely sulky. But he is 400 miles off, and his books sell, therefore you may abuse his books with impunity to him or yourself. I am only 40 miles off, and my books don't sell. That makes the difference.

I have done but a short article on Green. But more in another number. Observe how it is printed. The note is almost as long as the article, and it is to run along in line on each page. I will send a page or two on Henry White, and with extracts four or five on Bowles. My articles are in general far too long. You have Doubleday, and may use it or not as you think proper. I will probably send something else. Lady Blessington's book is very, very poor stuff indeed—quite inferior to the other, which was bad enough. . . . Dr Maginn is one of the cleverest men now living: but he writes best when most original. I do not so well like his imitations of others in 'Maga.' His "Hexameters," his "Chevy Chase" (in Latin verse), his "Irish Melodies," &c., are better than can be. His "Tête-à-tête," &c., were not so happy. Tell him so from me.

I hope everything good about the trial. Hope will manage the case with power and propriety. Dr Maginn and Mr L., if assistance can be given, are equal to anything required. Most anxious shall I be to hear from you about it.

This number must on no account be a middling one, and

remember to do with my articles anything you choose except abuse the writer of them, who is excessively thin-skinned. All the Magazines of last month except your own are worthless.

I could write a page or two rather funny on Hogg's Romance, but will not, if Mr L. is doing it or to do it. Though averse to being cut up myself, I like to abuse my friends. But this I would do with good-humour.

In the course of the year 1823 a new danger of an action for libel seems to have threatened the Magazine on the part of Leigh Hunt, whose former menace of the same kind seems to have come to nothing. The assaults upon the Cockney School had been going on briskly from time to time, both sides being warmly engaged. The special exasperation which occasioned this renewed threat it is scarcely worth while to record, for indeed it is difficult for an uninstructed person to draw the line between the abuse which is actionable and that which keeps outside the range of law. Hunt's intention had been communicated as before by the London agent — in this case Messrs Cadell & Davies, who, like their predecessors, were much troubled by the idea of being made parties in a libel case.

John Wilson to W. Blackwood.

If this business of Hunt's annoys you, I am exceedingly sorry, especially as it is an article of mine. Mr Cadell has long wished, I think, to get quit of the Magazine, but that you know best. Hunt's insolence is intolerable. The accursed scoundrel has a thousand times called you a Blackguard by name [in the 'Liberal' newspaper], and myself and Mr L. the same by implication, as all who write in your Magazine. I wish not to get into contact with such a scoundrel, for it might possibly lead to

the loss of my chair; but damn the Cockney if he shall crow over me! I do not know what answer you wrote about the author's name; but if, on consulting only two or three of my most judicious friends, Mr L. and you think I should give my name without being in any predicament, do so by all means. I saw the passage in the 'Liberal.' But independently of that I am entitled to call him blackguard at all times, and I never shall conceal being the writer if my friends think it would not be exposing myself to a degrading squabble. As it is, I leave it to Mr L. and yourself. If anybody asks me my answer, Yes, to be sure. . . . In my opinion he has no action and will fail. Why does he not bring one against you? He dare not; and that will be obvious to a jury if he bring one. I shall expect to hear progress. Meanwhile let not my name be withheld, if by giving it you and your best friends think good can be done.

A second letter follows to a similar effect:—

John Wilson to W. Blackwood.

It appears to me that I might write a letter to Mr Cadell telling him I was ready to give my name on being asked it by Hunt himself or on being informed that he wanted my name for his own satisfaction. But that I dislike libel actions, either as Prosecutor or Defender, I have no sort of objection (an action excepted) to give my name, — quite the reverse, I assure you, and neither Cockney nor any one else shall ever intimidate me either by a blow (! ! ! ! !) or a bluster. If the knave really asks my name, he shall have it without an hour's delay.

I am most happy in the thought of seeing you at Elleray, and on the whole it is better to take no step till you come up, when either I shall write to Mr Cadell or you be empowered to let Hunt know that the NAME is at his service. Perhaps that is the best way, as I wish to write no unnecessary letters. Consult with Mr L. before you leave Edinburgh, and ask him from me (with thanks for his letters) to write such a letter from me to Cadell as you think judicious, which bring

with you here. The publicity alone of any affair with this miscreant annoys me, for I value him at a single kick. Would the Tiger[1] be at my service if wanted?

I am most happy to hear good accounts of 'Dalton,' and do not fear that it will succeed as it deserves, and that the author will be ere long a Rival—to any man.

Mr Blackwood did go to Elleray on his way to London, and his impression of the place and of his visit are contained in a letter to his wife, dated, alas! only Thursday morning, six o'clock, in which the half-apologetic tone of a man conscious of idling away valuable time is amusingly apparent:—

W. Blackwood to Mrs Blackwood.

When you see where this is dated from, you will, I fear, be saying I have been too long here; but I think if you were here with me you would say, What a pity it is we could not stay longer at such a delightful place, and with such delightful friends! I anxiously hope you have been continuing to improve, and have been able to be in the garden to enjoy the fine weather. I also trust that the children have been all well, and doing everything you could wish—particularly Alec and Robert, upon whom I depend so much for making you happy during my absence.

You laugh, I know, when I write you that such and such a one was happy to see me. Well, I have just the same to say with regard to Mr and Mrs Wilson: they were kind as friends could be. I never saw the Professor looking better: he was clean shaved, which he had not been for some days, and quite in spirits at seeing me. Elleray is one of the most delightful places ever I saw. It commands a view of the whole Lake of Windermere, which is about thirteen miles long. It stands upon the face of a hill, and the grounds are very fine and well laid out. After dinner we walked about, admiring the whole of the very striking situation and surrounding scenery. I had

[1] As a second, we presume. See p. 239.

resolved upon coming back to Kendal yesterday morning, so as to catch the mail, but the Professor and Mrs W. insisted so much upon my staying another day, that I was at last obliged to yield: you will say I would not require much pressing, but I do assure you I wanted above all things to get on, I am so anxious to be in London and then to get back to you all again.

After breakfast yesterday morning the Professor and I walked to Bowness, about a mile and a half, where his boat The Endeavour, lies. You never saw such a boat—it is beautiful. We got on board before twelve, and sailed about on the lake till near four o'clock. It was quite delightful. The Professor would have been sadly mortified if I had gone away without sailing in his boat, which is quite the boast of all the Lakes.

Tell Alex. to tell Mr Lockhart that the Professor is in great spirits about the Magazine and everything else: he is to write to him to-day or to-morrow. I have just breakfasted at Kendal, and the coach is waiting.

The alarm of Hunt's action, which the Professor was prepared to meet so manfully, seems to have passed over without result; but now another shadow appeared on his path, a much more serious incident of a similar kind, and one which overwhelmed Wilson with horror and dismay: the utmost weight of poetic justice seemed about to overtake and almost crush the reckless performer of so many hasty and unconsidered acts. The 'Noctes' was perhaps the most dangerous medium which could have been invented for men of impulses so rash and utterances so free. And in one of these lively dialogues it so happened that reference was made to two persons in the usual slashing way. One of these was a certain hot-headed Irish squire called Martin, who had made himself remarkable by some eccentric appearances at the London police courts.

The other was Wordsworth. Martin was called a jackass, which probably he was; but Wordsworth——Why and for what reason the poet was assailed nobody could tell. He was, or had been, Wilson's friend, though there had recently been some unexplained coolness between them; but this was how, apparently in cold blood, or excited by nothing stronger than the rush of imaginary conversation, North, always pleased to startle and stir up, awoke the echoes with this much-discussed name:—

North. Wordsworth often writes like an idiot: and never more so than when he wrote of Milton, "My soul was like a star, and dwelt apart." For it dwelt in tumult and mischief and rebellion. Wordsworth is in all things the reverse of Milton: a good man and a bad poet.

Tickler. What! That Wordsworth whom 'Maga' cries up as the Prince of Poets.

North. Be it so: I must humour the fancies of some of my friends. But had that man been a great poet he would have produced a deep and lasting impression on the mind of England; whereas his verses are becoming less and less known every day, and he is in good truth already one of the illustrious obscure.

Tickler. I never thought him more than a very ordinary man—with some imagination certainly, but with no grasp of understanding, and apparently little acquainted with the history of his kind. My God! to compare such a writer with Scott and Byron!

North. And yet with his creed what might not a great poet have done. . . . What, pray, has he made out of this true and philosophical creed? A few ballads, pretty at the best, two or three moral fables, some natural description of scenery, and half-a-dozen variations of common distress or happiness. Not one single character has he created, not one incident—not one tragical catastrophe. He has thrown no light on man's estate

here below; and Crabbe with all his defects stands immeasurably above Wordsworth as the Poet of the Poor.

Tickler. Good. And yet the youngsters in that absurd Magazine of yours set him up to the stars as their idol, and kiss his very feet as if the toes were of gold.

North. Well, well; let them have their own way a while. I confess that the 'Excursion' is the worst poem of any character in the English language. . . . And then how ludicrously he overrates his own powers. This we all do; but Wordsworth's pride is like that of a straw-crowned king of Bedlam. For example, he indited some silly lines to a hedge-sparrow's nest with five eggs, and years after in a fit of exultation told the world in another poem equally childish that the Address to the Sparrow was "one strain that will not die."[1]

One of the amazing things in this most extraordinary and unprovoked assault was, that Wilson himself was the first of the "youngsters" who had "set up to the stars" the poet whom he thus fell upon with so much apparent rancour: and that no comprehensible reason had ever been suggested for the sudden change of sentiment. "Scott's poetry puzzles me," he says in the same astounding chapter; "it is often very bad. Except when his martial soul is up, he is but a tame and feeble writer." One cannot but surmise that his capacious yet wayward brain was temporarily "possessed," and that he did not know what he was saying. The moment, too, was a most extraordinary one for such an utterance. Immediately before he concocted this article we have a glimpse of him in one of Lockhart's notes describing the return journey from Ireland in attendance upon Scott. They landed in Wales, and afterwards proceeded to the

[1] 'Maga,' September 1825.

Lake Country, where their proceedings are reported as follows:—

J. G. Lockhart to W. Blackwood.

CHIEFSWOOD, *August* 26, 1825.

I came home last night in safety after a long and certainly a very pleasing journey. The last week we spent at the Lakes, when Sir W. Scott and I were two nights with the Professor at Elleray, and afterwards at Storrs, where Mr Canning is, at Wordsworth's, Southey's, and lastly Lowther Castle. The Professor was in his glory, with champagne, regattas, carronades, &c., at discretion. I am happy to tell you he went with us to Rydal Mount, and as if to make up for the absence or abstinence of seven years, ate up at our breakfast a whole jar of Miramichi herrings, two of which were at first produced as a great *bonne bouche* by the Stamp-master.

It would seem by this that his onslaught upon Wordsworth was immediately preceded by a visit of reconciliation and renewed friendship.

All this, however, might have passed under the shield of 'Maga,' and might have been set down to some other of the wild brotherhood, who exchanged names and individualities so often, had not, *sur ces entrefaites*, a terrible event occurred. Mr Martin, called a jackass in the same article, resented that description, as was not unnatural, and threatened an action, demanding with much clamour the name of the writer. The reader will not be surprised that when this demand reached Wilson in his leisure at Elleray, it should have come upon him like a thunderclap. Mr Blackwood, as usual, had to bear the brunt, and stands out in the long correspondence that follows, arguing, soothing, apologising in letter after letter, evading Martin's demand, yet holding out what hopes he could that it might be granted, while the true

criminal writhed and moaned out of sight behind. The following letter shows Wilson's state of mind :—

John Wilson to W. Blackwood.

This is the third prosecution threatened against articles of mine within three summers; and it is really time, both on my own account and yours, that the little I write for the Magazine should be less. Of the distress of mind such things cause me, it would be vain to speak. But let that be a topic for another day. An Irish Jackass he is assuredly, and an action will prove him one. I really do not know what advice to give. To give my name *in this case is impossible.*

Had not my feelings been *necessarily*, owing to other things in the 'Noctes,' of the most agonising kind, I should have come forward instantly, as I did before in Hunt's case; but as it was, death to my honour and happiness would have been the instant consequence, owing to several circumstances which I will communicate when I see you.

One distressing thing after another occurs to me. About a week ago a shocking accident happened on the lake. A boat was upset, and a fine youth, a friend of ours, drowned; and my boys' tutor got ashore with difficulty. He had violated my orders in being there at all, and it was twenty to one that he had taken John and Blair with him! This event has caused great misery to many here, and Mrs Wilson has been for two days almost distracted.

Here the pathetic mixture of troubles within and without, remorse of mind and illness of body, and the incident of the half-drowned tutor, adding another distraction with exasperating perversity, bring in a half-comic element: but the next is tragedy indeed, and shows an almost despairing collapse of every faculty :—

John Wilson to W. Blackwood.

I would fain write you a long letter; but long or short, of this be assured, that it is most kind, as every word uttered by me to you has ever been and ever will be. For I am your

friend, as you are mine. That is sufficient; nor will it ever be otherwise. When I last wrote I was in a state of great anguish and misery of mind, and have been ever since, though called upon to be present in the company of many strangers and acquaintances. To-day only I got your packet, it having lain at a farmhouse at some distance for at least two days. On reading your enclosures I was seized with a trembling and shivering fit, and was deadly sick for some hours. I am somewhat better, but in my bed, whence I now write. All this may be needless, but it is the case, and I am absolutely an object of any true friend's commiseration. To own that article is for a thousand reasons impossible. It would involve me in lies abhorrent to my nature. I would rather die this evening. Remember how with Hunt I was most willing to come forward; here it is death to do so. I am absolutely not in my right mind to-night. I wish well to all mankind, and am incapable of dishonour. This avowal would be fatal to my character, my peace, to existence. Say nothing to me that could add to my present misery.

All you have done seems on the whole right. With Mr Lockhart within a day's journey, how could it be otherwise, and your own excellent sense?

Write to me instantly, and tell me what I can do in this business—as to writing another 'Noctes' about it, or anything else. Were I to go to London it would be to throw myself into the Thames. All this may, but will not, I hope, be unintelligible to you. Lying or dishonour are to me death. I am wholly incapable just now of giving advice, but I am able to do what you wish in the affair, on which some light will probably be thrown from London by this time.

In itself it is contemptible as to Martin, but in other points shocking to me. If I must avow myself, I will not survive it.

Act in it with that proviso, as you and Mr L. and others choose, and you cannot go wrong far or at all. I would come to Edinburgh, but am unable from distraction of mind. I shall be there on the 25th of October. Meanwhile will instantly answer your letter, and do whatever you wish as to any article about it.

There is, no doubt, something of the exaggeration of an excitable mind in this, but Wilson's horror and

anguish were not without just foundation. To be obliged to acknowledge himself as the harsh and unkindly critic not only of Wordsworth, whose bread he had recently eaten, but of Scott, his tried and trusty friend, whose support had been of such importance to him in more than one crisis of his life, was indeed a prospect which the boldest might find it difficult to face. And one can scarcely wonder that Wilson, so little bold morally, should be in despair — helpless and without resource in an emergency of this kind, though ready and delighted to face any physical danger, and withal a really affectionate and loving human creature, genuinely remorseful for the evil, though unfortunately not perceiving it till after its committal. In the endless correspondence that followed, we have many illustrations of what would have been the whimsical, if it had not been the very disagreeable, position of Blackwood—something like that of a mother standing in front of and shielding a very naughty child, endeavouring with every argument to prove that he did not mean it, that it was only his fun, &c., &c., while all the friends gathered round, making a circle to shield the culprit. Maginn, who had been hastily appealed to, to calm his countryman, did all but take the guilt upon himself in the impulsive generosity which redeemed many qualities less praiseworthy; and Lockhart came instantly forward, with indignant disapproval indeed, but every desire to help, as the following letter will show:—

J. G. Lockhart to W. Blackwood.

I can't but write to say how truly I am grieved to find you again annoyed with this disgusting sort of business, which, as

you say, I thought had all been well over. One thing I must say: when, after seeing Wordsworth and Wilson together in such a friendly style, I came down here and found on my table that 'Noctes,' I could not understand Wilson's having been able to act as I had just been seeing him do. However, this is nothing to the matter, altho' I confess it gives me more pain than any merely pecuniary punishment he ever can undergo for the squib about Martin. I suspected that blockhead would be up, from what he said the other day about Black and the 'Morning Chronicle.' Bold man is he to dare both the Whig and the Tory press, if he persists.

His action, if brought in London, would not be worth thinking of comparatively; but the Jury Court is another business. I trust the Professor will write some good-humoured thing sufficient to settle the madman's vanity. If he does not, *I will try* what I can do upon again hearing from you, and seeing what he says. Meantime by all means have Maginn's opinion.

If the worst come to the worst, I think the man who neglects one of the largest and most dreary estates of miserable Ireland, where scarcely a man has clothes to cover his nakedness, and keeps up a roar about cruelty to Horses and Bullocks in the London Police Courts, will not be likely to come very well off if properly buckled to, even before a jury of Adamites. It is a great thing for you that the 'Morning Chronicle' is in the same scrape.

I am sadly afraid from what appeared in yesterday's 'New Times' that you are to have more trouble about Martin. If I *can* do anything, I am at your command; but really the Professor ought to attend to his own business. Maginn's behaviour is most generous. Sorry indeed should I be to see him placing me under such an obligation, and I trust Wilson will take a proper view of the case. I myself would not, *coûte que coûte*, allow this; and besides, it will be of no use. One thing is obvious, that *no disgrace* can come to you or the Magazine from the business—the idiocy of Martin being so notorious. Wilson cannot suffer you to have any loss in your purse. Therefore don't, after doing your best, permit this thing to worry or annoy your mind. He would never get heavy damages most certainly.

I shall be very anxious to hear the result of your letter, which has been skilfully done—much improved in your hands. The Mag. is a very good number. 'Mansie' and the 'Noctes' highly diverting, and the political articles of real excellence, and a cursed deal too much of poetry such as every human being can write and nobody ever will read,—of that you may be assured.

September 18, 1825.

The Professor really seems to act on such occasions as if he were mad. I am sure you must have remonstrated against that 'Noctes,' and it is too bad to fly out thus, altho' forewarned in so many ways. But *we* understand these failures of one of the best-hearted men ever God put breath into.

The end of this story, so far as I can make out, was the publication in the next number of the Magazine of a letter called "Midsummer Madness and Mr Martin," in which the hand of Lockhart seems discernible. "'Why, this is very midsummer madness,' says the Lady Olivia," he begins:—

Letter of Phillipus—Blackwood's Mag., Oct. 1825.

The midsummer moon, Mr North, seems to have poured her brightest beams upon Ambrose's Athens during the last of your 'Noctes Cœnæque'—I cannot on this particular occasion add 'Deum.' Now that the air has been chastened with a few night-frosts, and the leaves begin to assume the sober livery of autumn, I am in hopes that you will not cast your eye over the pages in which that "colloquy divine" is embalmed without some feeling of regret—I had almost said of shame. If I were in your place I know full surely what my own sensations would be. At all events, permit me to expect that at the fag-end of September you will listen quietly to what a staunch friend of 'Maga' and of the Good Cause thinks it incumbent on him to say. . . .

That the opinions expressed in the last of the 'Noctes Ambrosianæ' in regard to Mr Wordsworth are really the opinions of Mr North, I cannot for a moment believe—in the face of the long and triumphant battle which 'Maga' has fought in defence

of that gentleman's character and genius. As little, I would fain take upon me to decide, does the sober intellect of the sage Christopher sanction the wild and cruel rhapsody of which my worthy friend the member for Galway is made the subject by those jovial interlocutors. The jocular depreciation of Wordsworth will, I daresay, be understood well enough by those who, from long experience, know that the Poet of the Lakes has no admirer in the world half so efficient as yourself: they will perceive at once that you were all in your *lunes* when such things were said, or supposed to be said. But I do not remember that Mr Martin's name was ever before introduced in your pages, and am the more concerned that it should have been introduced for the first time in this manner; because, sir, it happens to be the fact that at this moment the character of that most humane and generous individual is rendered systematically and seriously the butt of the malevolent wit, if wit it can be called, of a portion of the periodical press with which in general no one seems to hold less in common than the person I have the honour of addressing. The nonsense which you have permitted yourself to set forth for mere nonsense sake is cherished and applauded, as solemnly thought and deliberately said, by creatures who for once enjoy the satisfaction of finding a name that really does carry weight and authority with it on their side, their own paltry side.

An account and panegyric of Martin follows. He was the first man to introduce into Parliament a bill for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals: and he did not confine his philanthropical exertions to carrying this measure, but himself stayed in London, through all the trying progress of the autumn, scorning the delights of grouse and other sport in order to watch over the execution of its regulations, bringing unfortunate drovers to justice, and then with delightful Irish inconsistency begging them off again, and pledging himself that they would never do it again—from whence his constant appearance at the police

courts, and consequent exposure to all the jibes of the Press. Never was a more complete *amende* made in words, and Christopher was not spared by his stern apologist. Wilson himself put the best face upon it, and added a note.

> Our friend [he said] has evidently taken a very serious view of what was not, nor was ever meant to be, anything but a joke. We take it, not very many of our readers are so far behindhand as to be in any danger of misunderstanding matters of this kind. Above all, we are very sure the kind and merry spirit of Mr Martin is far above being moved, in the way our correspondent seems to suspect, by anything in the shape of a joke, even if it were a bad one.

It is somewhat difficult to understand the nature of such a joke. And how Wilson, even at the very height of reckless utterance, could have indulged in jesting of the kind, nobody has ever been able to explain. We can but give him the advantage of Lockhart's generous description, "one of the best-hearted men ever God put breath into," and forgive him for its sake. What better testimonial could a friend give? And it is without suspicion, as said to a third party, and mingled with both blame and regret.

There was, however, a great deal of trouble even after this, and I have no doubt the publisher's pocket again suffered; but it is to be hoped that in the end the "kind and merry spirit of Mr Martin" was satisfied. The eulogy which he had received in the pages of 'Maga' was certainly much more extensive and important than the offence.

In returning to the ordinary course of affairs after this exciting episode, we may place here a proof that, after all, notwithstanding the periodical risks to which

he exposed both publisher and publication, Wilson was indeed the mainspring of the Magazine, and the chief upholder of all that was most precious to the ambition, and important in the career, of the friend whose fidelity to him was never shaken, whatever might occur, and who never lost an occasion of celebrating his good deeds. The following letter has all the greater weight as coming immediately after the Martin episode: and it reveals in a most engaging manner the close connection between the two men, and the deep and warm feeling in Mr Blackwood's heart, ready to forget the peccadilloes which he had so often to pardon and condone:—

W. Blackwood to J. Wilson.

EDINBURGH, 17*th Dec.* 1825.

I have sent Mrs Wilson the Magazine, and I trust she will be as much delighted with it as I am, and that is saying a great deal.

How deeply I am indebted to you, it is quite impossible for me to express. Anxious and restless as I always am at all times, I was more especially so just now; but I felt it cruel, as you were so unwell, even to wish you to make an exertion: still I could not help my wishes, and nobly and most effectively have you gone beyond them. Great as the advantages must be to me at such a moment to publish such a number, it is not on this account that I feel so happy; but it is from the delight I always have had, and always will have, in seeing you doing what no one else can attempt but yourself. So much is this feeling, as it were, a part of my nature, that by a sort of momentary mental delusion I think of your articles as if I had been capable of producing them myself: sure I am I could not feel more proud of them if I had been capable of producing them. You will excuse all this, which I could not help saying to you in the fulness of my heart.

And you will also, I hope, pardon me for saying that the Magazine is now going on so well I trust I will every day have

it more in my power to make it worth your while to give your powerful aid to it, and that it will be every day more and more creditable to every one connected with it. The last of the disagreeables (and I trust it will be the last) that concerned Martin's business is now settled, as you will see by the enclosed letter from Cadell. This I take upon myself, and I hope you will consider our Magazine accounts for 1825 as closed. I hope and flatter myself that I shall have the pleasure of sending you some good round scores early in 1826.

On the other hand, to counterbalance the warm sentiment of the publisher, Wilson, though constantly disappointing and wearying out his almost boundless patience, now and then had fine impulses of work, and placed himself within the safeguard of rules and promises, most heartily undertaken, though doomed to be broken. These alternations of extreme virtue and a devotion almost too complete, with breakings down nearly as notable, occur in amusing succession all through the record — by no means, however, so amusing to Blackwood as to us.

J. Wilson to W. Blackwood.

See if the printers have anything ready. *I want an impulse much to get on.* But I intend to write for the Mag. every day till dinner—and then my other affairs—till Tuesday, which will, I hope, bring a long article to a close. It has not yet assumed much shape. If the number contains any Critique, pray let me see it.

I send now the last of the leading article. I must stop till I know how long it is; perhaps it is long enough. . . . Had I attempted to put in all the matter I have, the whole would have been ruined. Tell me this evening how many pages remain for me after Croly and Mr Hay's poem of three pages, which being lively should go in by itself—I think after Croly, if my article will not be much shortened thereby.

I have read over the article twice with great attention. I hope you will leave out everything I have scored. Two or three things not unobjectionable I have allowed to remain, for they cannot be struck out without hurting something that remains. The article will read well as it now stands. But I would on no account call it No. V., for that looks like poverty. The Doctor ought to follow; he is a better writer than Croly.

We are thus brought once again to the machinery of the Magazine after Wilson had become the chief adviser, and the first excitement of the beginning was over: though, indeed, as the reader has seen, there was no one so good as he in keeping that excitement alive. The scraps of criticism are few, for these were no doubt sent flying from one to another round the table in the saloon, where all the brotherhood, soon thinned by removal and change, still met continually, and were thus exhausted and never got into print: but here and there comes a word of interest mingled with all the discussions of articles done, or doing, or, alas! at the last moment found not capable of being done.

Here, for example, is a curious scrap. Galt's books, 'The Provost' and 'Sir Andrew Wylie,' were, as will be seen hereafter, specially revised and superintended by Mr Blackwood himself, and therefore extremely interesting to him:—

I hear 'The Provost' is doing excellently. 'Nigel' has amused me much. It is beyond all his works, lively, spirited, dramatic, new—and after all not a Work. 'Sir Andrew Wylie,' I have heard, assisted the author in the character of King James.

This will probably cause the reader to look with more respect on the history of 'Sir Andrew Wylie,'

which has lately been reprinted by the Messrs Blackwood in a very attractive new edition, and is, in many respects, a most amusing book. There are, in fact, certain analogies between its shrewd simplicity and astuteness and the wonderful picture of gentle King Jamie, which a little later came from the greater artist's hand. One can imagine Scott's laugh and cordial statement of the suggestion he had found in the cunning and the fun of the humble hero—a suggestion no doubt overstated in his large and generous way.

The few words which head the following letter are liberal for the time and place in which they were written. Silvio Pellico has been tamed down into a book for the schoolroom, a first lesson in lucid Italian, without the difficulties either of the archaic or the too modern; but in those days he was a rebel, a revolutionary—such a being as a High Tory, under whatever difference of foreign circumstances he might exist, could scarcely forgive:—

I like Pellico: he is a Liberal: but an Italian need not be a slave to the aristocracies. The book is a very interesting one. I should like to see no politics in the December number, if possible. I have not done anything, *nor has it been possible.* I have not even an introductory lecture for Tuesday; but I wish to arrange for next week, and then I shall begin to arrange the Spenser. The Anthology will end the Magazine. I have most of the materials for it ready; and if it is of any consequence, can send to the printers eight or ten or twelve pages to be putting into type on Monday. I shall also do a Morning Monologue, what I wrote of the other day being useless. These are my three articles: Byron, Pellico (?), Barrington, will make six—all good and light and amusing; and three or four more as good or better, and also light and amusing, would make a lively

number. But I am prosing needlessly. Spenser cannot be less than thirty pages—ten of extracts,[1] and twenty of my own writing. The printers have a Spenser, and thus no delay will occur when they get my manuscript. Till Tuesday morning I shall occupy myself with my class; after that I shall work for 'Maga.'

Six articles seem a liberal allowance from one hand, but we wonder whether they all came to port in peace; for if they did, there must have been halcyon times in Princes Street, where so often the publisher's office was occupied by troubled men, emissaries from the printer added to the already excited staff, gnashing their teeth, probably using improper language, worn to the last thread of their patience before the lagging manuscript came. The poor little printer's devil, who had to cool his heels for hours in the hall in Wilson's house at Ann Street, came in sometimes, it appears, for blame, as will be seen in the solemnity of the following appeal. "I shall be up at three," says the culpable Professor—

but have done nothing. I remember to-morrow. I hope to be able to begin fairly this evening. I have tried, but fallen through everything.

I request you to call John, the bearer of this, and your boy into the back-shop. John denies keeping him above five minutes; and he himself declared to me in John's presence that it certainly was not a quarter of an hour. I told him you had yourself told me that he said he was detained three-quarters of an hour, and he declared he had not said so, and must have been misunderstood. I wish you, then, to ascertain from the parties how this was—that the boy may never again have

[1] There seems to have been a rule that extracts, which often were long, should not count for remuneration—at least, at the same rate. Wilson was unmerciful in this respect, and occasionally sent articles which were made up of quotations.

to wait *one minute.* My belief is, from his own avowal, that he was not kept *ten minutes,* or rather not five.

One does not hear, unfortunately, what the result was of the examination in the back-shop; but without further evidence, and without any blame to John, we feel inclined to give our vote in favour of the boy.

The following must have been written in a gayer mood:—

Do your orders to all the devils on no account to call at any time on me without giving me an opportunity of confabulating with their demonships. The system of giving in parcels and flying off without an answer has again begun, and is too much by far for my temper. The imp whom I caught last night in the act of evanishment promised to haunt me this morning at seven, but I smell no brimstone. Nevertheless "by the pricking of my thumbs" I feel his approach, and here he is.

Set up the accompanying MSS. immediately.

The Professor's proceedings evolved in the minds of the Blackwood family in general a distrust of literary punctuality which has scarcely died out in the third generation. The now much diminished band who fought under the banner of John Blackwood will remember the twinkle in his eye with which, quite irrespective of fact, he would suggest to his contributors to "remember that this was a short month," while at the same time prepared to meet any delay with a laugh and a ready excuse for the guilty writer, which must also have been a development from the much-tried patience of his father. I myself remember in the sixties to have been in the condition of Wilson, having "done nothing," on the 20th of the month, to the next number of a story then running in the

Magazine: the said Magazine being due in London by the 1st of the next month. But these were still heroic days. The correspondence of Wilson continues always in the same tone, explaining with the plausible amplitude of a habitual sinner the reason of his delays, or with the simplicity of a defaulter at school forestalling the expected reproof, or with almost a whimper, like a woman wounded, in fond or indignant woe, declaring that he cannot bear the changed look or disapproving word. Our excellent founder had to support all these varieties of treatment as he might, sometimes pacing his office in the fret and fume of wrathful impatience, almost *au bout*, fearing for a breakdown altogether of the all-important Magazine; sometimes meeting with all his sober strength the petulant protest of the man who would not endure reproach; sometimes melting in answer to an agonised complaint of changed looks or tones which the tender culprit could not bear. It was amusing to hear in the many descriptions and anecdotes of that lifelong connection, which I have heard from Miss Isabella Blackwood, the thrill still existing of the tone of family wrath, resentment, affection, and enthusiasm for that intolerable and beloved Professor, who kept the father of the house in continual commotion, sometimes all delight and admiration, sometimes half wild with indignation and impatience. The publisher's daughter could not, to her last days, laugh at the amusing, exasperating, continued struggle, though her listeners did so at the whimsical record. The reader will be able to form an idea of it from the following letters. The reference in the first is to an article which he had been asked to revise and improve:—

The lad had better call as late to-night as possible—say eleven—as I have done nothing to Abion—after flinging aside as much as would make a good many pages, written on various points, all inapplicable, I fear, and useless.

It is true that I willingly enough agreed to add what I could to the Abion article, and it is true that in saying so I said a very foolish thing: for I knew that I was saying what is rarely possible to be done—at least by me. I do not believe you yourself know what is wanted to his article, but merely have a vague idea that it might be much better. No doubt it will or may be a disappointment that I have not done that, whatever it may be; but there is no blame on my part, for the simple truth is that I cannot, and there is an end of it.

Perhaps it would be better to leave me 24 pages at the beginning, and make Abion to follow. I shall also say here, mildly but firmly, that in future, in case of any disappointment arising to you from any delay on my part, you must not speak in the manner you sometimes choose to assume towards me, as for instance on Friday. You may mean a thing, nay, you may think it, all right; but *I do not*, and as my manner is always courteous to all men, I cannot at all like yours on such occasions: and whether I am reasonable or unreasonable, I repeat, in the most friendly temper of mind, that you must consider what I now write, and not suffer me to leave your shop with the feeling that you have become basely cruel. There is no use in your saying a single word to me on the subject. I do not believe *you* will take any blame to yourself for your manner, but that you will think *me* in the wrong. Be it so: but I am getting older every day, and such things are offensive to me in a degree, perhaps more than should be. We have neither of us any reason to doubt the other's esteem; but as I know that I am entitled always to politeness, I wish you to consider what I now say, for whether I am right or wrong I feel as I say, and I have made up my mind to stay away at all times when I feel your manners to be unpleasant.

Finally this particular business seems to have ended well enough, for we hear in another note that the

"corrected slips" of the Abion have been gone over and sent to Mr St Barbe, presumably the author of the same. But the feeling of injury continues:—

No man is more unwilling to give or take offence from trifles than I am; and no man more disposed to allow to a friend the same privilege of finding fault with me as I with him in trifles. But it either is a merit or demerit in me, to dislike any symptom of displeasure shown towards me unnecessarily, or at a time when it can do no good, and when I am endeavouring to do what I can. I lose many more hours and days in trying to fix on what to write, and to bring my mind into capacity to write, than in writing. All this is painfully known to myself, but cannot be so well known to you. For three days have I sat like an idiot with slips before me, and scribbling childish nonsense without success or hope of reward, and ended in disappointing you not unjustly. It may be unreasonable to do so and yet expect you to be not displeased, for it certainly must be annoying; but it adds to my own annoyance to have added to my consciousness of imbecility your expression of annoyance also. You cannot imagine the hundredth part of the lets and hindrances that besiege my mind about articles; and they often assail me at the very juncture when their operation is worst for all parties. That is a fact; but so far from any good being done by your letting me see your annoyance, the evil is magnified thereby a hundredfold. It amounts, in short, to utter extinction of all form whatever, as you must frequently have seen. So no more about it.

I shall begin to-day if possible with ——. If not, with whatever else I can do, that we may get on.

P.S.—I think, on the whole, that you had better let the number be finished without saying a word about my letters; and after that I shall certainly, as I ought, read kindly whatever you may say, or, what will be better, show by a good article or two that there is no need of anything being said.

Be indeed a good boy and never do it again. Such are the curious remonstrances, complaints, and excuses,

with tears in the big blue eyes, and a tremulous commotion in the big Hercules frame, when his publisher was angry with him! There are so many of these emotional protests and confessions that it is difficult to choose from among them. Here is another of a more practical tone. It is dated from Elleray, the cottage on Windermere, to which Wilson still escaped when he could, in that delightful recess of the entire summer which makes a chair in a Scottish university the most heavenly of official situations:—

I had wished and intended to write you a very long letter, but shall not. Suffice it to say that it was more for my own interest than yours that I should have written many articles during the summer. When a man is not able to attend to his own interests he is not able to attend to those of another. I would not have come here had I not intended to write a good deal. This being the case, no blame attaches to me, for mind and body, the former through the latter, incapacitated me from doing almost anything. I wish therefore *not a word to be said further between* us on any account on this matter. I am at this moment scarcely able from nervousness to write these few lines.

I shall arrive at your house by coach or mail on Tuesday first, if there is a place; if not, on Wednesday. I hope that change of scene and the journey may do me good. I have material ready, and next day I will set to work on anything I can do, so as to ensure a good number. I suppose that four or five days will be at my service, and if I can get into good spirits, I will work stoutly for these days. I will return with 'Maga' in my pocket.

No doubt he was the soul of the family circle while he was there, and filled the house with jest and laughter. The following note, without any name, refers to some such visit:—

Professor W. came to town on Monday last week, and stayed at Newington till the Thursday, when he went back again to

Innerleithen, where he and his family had been for the last four weeks. While in our house he began and finished the concluding article in this No. of 'Maga,' the review of Moore's 'Epicurean.' He had disappointed me sadly in not sending me articles he had promised, and I had also been disappointed by Mr Robinson, so that I was in a most miserable state with regard to this number till the Prof. came to town. I had a terrible hurry and skurry to get ready in time. The whole number was printed and published in eight or ten days.

Our next view of the Professor is after some important correspondence as to ways and means, in the shape of a triumphantly reformed character, anticipating nothing in the future but duty and glory, perfect trust and co-operation, and boundless and successful work :—

I am extremely glad that I explained myself at some length in my letter, because it has been the cause of your most friendly and flattering letter. I am extremely glad that I alluded to a belief in my mind that you had often overpaid me a guinea page. If I know anything of myself, it is that I am not too money-fond. Better for me it had been, if long ago I had been more so. But your answer has prevented the possibility of my fearing that you could ever think so. My contributions to 'Maga' shall be regular and vigorous. I see, as you say, that I may make 600 guineas a-year, and I will do so. You shall always, if I am in health at all, *have as much of mine as you wish* —and never a single page more. With fourteen numbers in the year perhaps I may earn considerably more than 600! but not one line of mine shall ever go into 'Maga' that you do not prefer for her interests to any other contributor. Mutual benefit is the spirit of our understanding.

Meanwhile think of things to be done during the winter. I have thought of a good many—and if a bad number appears during the next year, *Deo volente,* I shall wonder at my own imbecility.

I send a 'Noctes' and a [name illegible]. Both seem very long; but let both be put up immediately. The first I can

easily if necessary cut down into two with some additions, and the other likewise has some passages which, if too long, will go into some other literary article. A good literary article shall be in every number. For the love of God no chill slow 'Noctes'; for few, if anybody, liked them, and many hated them. That was my fault, or rather my misfortune.

It would be vain to hope that such a beatific state of affairs could last. Wilson, it is evident, retired to the country, as many have done, with a certainty that in the leisure and quiet he could do wonderful things; but the open air, and the summer, and the hundred inducements to idle and to wander, were too many for him, and winter and the long evenings seemed then the only hope. But by times everything failed, and indolence, or dilatoriness, or "nervousness," not then as now so tremendous an agency in men's lives, got the better of him once more. Things came now and then to such a dreadful pitch that a Magazine appeared without him — that is, without anything from his hand. He writes in startled admiration and wonder of this strange fact, not without a faint tone of injury, though quite aware it is his own fault. "Let the Doctor [Maginn] do all kinds of clever things for 'Maga' this time," he says; "there should be a new, striking, delightful, and conclusive preface, which M. and L. can do very well without W."

Another cry of compunction follows:—

John Wilson to W. Blackwood.

I have passed several very unhappy days in the thought of acting badly towards you and the Magazine. I declare it to be utterly impossible for me to write either on Dalton or a 'Noctes.' Here have I sat for two hours in vain, unable to write a syllable. If it were otherwise, you know that I would strain every nerve to do it. It seems silly and unaccountable, but it is

absolutely true; I do not believe I could do it to save my life. I have lost as many hours in *not doing anything* as I might have done the articles in. I feel it impossible—out of my power—and I have done all I could to do them. I therefore shall go home. For misery it is to sit here impotent.

You must just put Wrest in place of the 'Noctes,'—and either Beddoes or anything else that is tolerable in place of Dalton.

There is no use in saying more: absolute incapacity prevents me, and for five hundred pounds I could not do what I wished to do most earnestly and truly.

Here follows an exchange of compliments in respect to money, that fruitful source of misunderstandings, in which all is amiable, honourable, and magnanimous. The letter is endorsed by Mr Blackwood, "Received 14th December 1826, in answer to my note telling him I had been disappointed of Robinson's [a political writer] article, begging of him to do something, and enclosing him a draft on the Royal Bank for £50."

John Wilson to W. Blackwood.

I return the order, for although to all men with families, &c., money is most desirable, yet under present circumstances I cannot accept this order. It is returned, however, merely from a feeling; and no thought of your being wrong in sending it. Sending money to me can never be wrong—it must always be extremely right and pleasant, but just now I cannot but return it.

I am distressed, too, about Robinson; and yet, perhaps, although such articles are necessary at times, and frequently, they are not necessary always. All last night was I forced to lose in an idiotic Inquest, with that accident on Windermere —and am this moment up, having been wearied to death. I must evidently do something at this pinch, and perhaps four or five pleasant articles without much pretence may do. I dine out at six, but shall begin to something in a quarter of an hour.

The courteous publisher replied in the same strain of high politeness and lofty feeling:—

W. Blackwood to J. Wilson.

Saturday, Dec. 1826.

Since you think it best (and your wishes will always be my rule) to return me the draft, I hope you will with the same frankness draw on me from time to time. My anxious wish is that the Magazine should really be an object worth your attending to, both as respects remuneration, respectability, and general influence.

It is no doubt annoying that Robinson has not been able to do his article at this particular moment, but if you can find leisure to do what you intend, the number will be much more popular, and the cessation from politics for one month will have no bad effect. Perhaps, however, you may land upon something political connected with literature. I cannot help still thinking that if Croly's critique upon Sheridan's Dramas were altered and shortened, and a spirited view given of Moore's life in your own admirable way, it would be a most delightful article. But I do not wish to suggest anything except what wholly strikes yourself.

Another time, however, the Professor was less coy. "I keep the twenty guineas," he says, "as it is foolish to return money. But it would be a little *Jewish* or so to consider my articles worth forty guineas, and, therefore, I will give you a good sheet or two for your next, if required, gratis. Money is an excellent stimulant to all virtuous actions."

Robinson appears from time to time, sometimes applauded, sometimes much the reverse. Here is an instance of the difficulties which all contributors had to pass through:—

The beginning of R—— is beastly. He is quite mad on one Idea. But possibly what he says about the Poor Laws may be

good: and if so and not long, I would perhaps clip off the beginning and insert it. He must submit, as *I* and others are willing to do occasionally, to reason, and your and the Magazine's interests. As soon as I get the whole of the 'Noctes' I will finish it off. I have got all except what was sent last night and this morning. I think it will be good, but it must be interspersed with touches here and there. It will be thirty-two pages.

The following is interesting, as bearing upon the vexed question, so often discussed since, of the editorship. Wilson gives no uncertain sound on this subject; and the faint grudge as to the profit of the post, which Blackwood did not choose to depute to any one, gives point to the disclaimer. It was an opportunity of giving the publisher a friendly prick in passing.

John Wilson to W. Blackwood.

Last night I received a letter from Dr Philpotts, of the kindest nature, but saying that he had been told yesterday that I was the editor of "that invaluable Magazine." I must answer his letter this evening, and in alluding to that part of it do not wish to say anything that may seem to contradict anything in your letter to him if you have written to him, and if from any expression in your letter he uses that expression to me.

I am not editor of that invaluable Magazine either in responsibility or in annual income, which ought to be to the editor—namely, Mr Blackwood—at the rate of other periodicals, from £500 to £1500 per annum. But I am always most willing to assist and give my advice to the said editor, and to write articles, and good ones occasionally when I can, at the rate of sixteen guineas per sheet—good payment to a first-rate contributor. I am always ready, too, to avow publicly or privately my connection with 'Maga,' or to say to Dr Philpotts or any other man that I am in your confidence and you in

mine on the subject of 'Maga.' If I were to say to the doctor, "I am not editor, and you are misinformed," I should be saying the truth, but might seem, perhaps, to him to contradict your letter, if it be from that he speaks. If I were to say "I am editor," or acquiesce virtually in his remark, I would be taking credit to myself for what I do not deserve, and defrauding you of the merit of capacity and spirit in the conduct thereof.

If, therefore, you have not written to the doctor at all, I shall, without disavowing anything, tell him I am not editor but a friend of yours, always ready to give advice and an opinion when requested, and a chief writer in 'Maga.' If you have written to him anything from which he draws the conclusion aforesaid, it would be well I should know its import, that you and I should not to such a man appear to be saying two different things.

This matter, however, which seems to be taken up in so amiable a manner, must, it would appear, have given rise to one more of the frequently recurring and tragical breaches between Wilson and the much-enduring head of affairs in Princes Street. There are several voluminous letters on the subject, in which our child of genius goes further even than before in his wounded feelings, and complains, for many pages, of a manner, an air, a look of distance and indifference, which he could not bear:—

I beg leave to say there was something by no means agreeable to me in the style of your manner yesterday in respect to Mr Philpotts and his pamphlet. Notwithstanding that, however, I overlooked it, and to-day sent a few lines for you to send to him, which I read to you. You did not thank me for these, either by word or manner, but merely said rather drily that you had intended to say the same yourself. Now, I prefer writing this to saying it. I have to-day shown you all kindness and disposition to kindness, in spite of the displeasure I felt. But if ever again you assume any shade of the same manner, however slight, you may depend on this, as surely as that you

and I are alive, that I will confine myself henceforth solely and exclusively to the occasional writing of articles, and leave everything else entirely to yourself.

Neither am I going to argue on this subject, or to say that you are wrong in assuming such a manner. But I merely say that I will not endure any of it, even the very least; and it is to me most offensive.

With respect to not sending as usual a copy of the Magazine down to me, which, from your manner, seemed connected with the same cause or some cause to me unknown, it is purely laughable and absurd, and to me, of course, who have seen the sheets till I may well be tired of them, a matter of utter indifference. Why this occurred to you now and not before, I do not know; but the caution or reserve, or whatever else it may be, is utterly ludicrous.

An answer, expressing surprise at so sudden an onslaught on such visionary cause, seems to have been sent, and this is the reply:—

Perhaps it is unnecessary to say anything more on this subject, especially as of all men I most dislike and have the least turn for letter-writing that can seem to be of a querulous character; yet to prevent any present or future misconception I shall say a few words.

I do not see why you should have been so utterly confounded by my letter, for my displeasure — I will say anger — on Friday was obvious enough, and, therefore, that I should afterwards say so to you seems to be nothing unexpected or extraordinary. I did not conceal my displeasure, which was reasonable and just; and I am sure you did not conceal yours, and therefore my letter need not have at all surprised you, whether you agreed or disagreed with its contents.

I say my anger was perfectly reasonable and just, for I could not comprehend then, nor do I now, what you meant or wished to be done in the matter of Philpotts. You offended me by insisting on the word *promise;* and when I denied all promise, told me I must have forgotten: which was not the case, memory having nothing to do with it. There neither has nor

could have been any promise. I offered to review the pamphlet, but not surely in the face of sense or reason, and I gave you the day before, Thursday, my impressions on one point of difficulty, in which you perfectly agreed with me. I told you if that difficulty could be removed or got over in any way, the article should be written, and yet in the midst of all this, which you felt as much to be a difficulty as I did, and acquiesced in all I said about it, you kept looking dissatisfied, and saying something or other which was to me unintelligible. There was nothing further for me to say or do. I explained clearly a certain difficulty which you clearly saw, and for you to write to Philpotts telling him that I thought so or felt so at present, but would write to him by-and-by, was said by me from the very beginning. In such a case to call by the name of *promise*, and to seem to think that promise violated or rejected by me, what was merely a proposal to do that which might be useful to the Magazine, but which had turned out to be the reverse (till the difficulty was removed), did annoy me very much and justly; for allow me to say there was something exceedingly disagreeable in your whole manner, and what I will not on any future occasion endure. . . .

It is true that I curbed but did not conceal my displeasure. I spoke to you about the Magazine, and I wrote the paragraph to Philpotts. There was no reason why I should not. But I take credit rather than otherwise for that; because, having determined to tell you my mind, I felt no inclination to be unkind or indifferent about the Magazine or any other matter. That you consciously or positively intended any slight or insult to me in the matter of the latter I did not and do not say; but I did and do say that your manner was not only ungracious but uncivil, and I question if any man was ever called back ten times unceremoniously from the street and given a letter to read, and then allowed to depart, with such perfect nonchalance and indifference.

As for the stoppage of the Magazine, I said in my letter to you that the occurrence of that measure at present, and in connection with what had occurred, seemed to arise possibly from that cause; whether it did or not is best known to yourself. I believe it did not exactly, as you withheld it from Mr

Cay; but from a certain feeling of dissatisfaction. . . . From whatever cause proceeding, the circumstance of not sending the Magazine to me as you used to do, both with alacrity and pleasure, continues to appear to me in a ludicrous light, for I do not understand it. When you mentioned your intention there was the same dryness and distance in your manner to which you have alluded: in short, there was nothing but a slight sneer of contempt, so slight, it would appear, that it had escaped your notice, so that you interpreted literally words, the true meaning of which I did not think could be mistaken. That I could approve of any such absurd or unnecessary measure was not possible. Some reason or other there must be for the alteration; and I must conjecture that it is merely that there may be in the world one General Oracle without any exception.

To be done once and for ever, I repeat that I was offended because not treated in the only way I ought to be, and offended the more because I never did once in the whole of my life treat you with the slightest approach to annoyance, and because in an intercourse which is not merely one of business but of voluntary acts of kindness, also of advice, always cheerfully offered when wanted, I cannot, I will not, I ought not to stomach anything of the sort, whether intentional or unintentional. I was not treated in the way I like, that is the short and the long of the matter, and there must be no repetition of it.

As to anything vexing you, if it be anything serious, I can only say that I am truly sorry for it, and hope that it is gone by. Let there be no further mention or allusion to this subject if you please, nor shall you ever perceive the slightest effect on my behaviour or feelings towards you from what is in one sense a mere *nothing*, but in another a something to be avoided.

Perhaps this letter was rather too long to quote; but it affords a curious view of the emotional and childlike character of the man, so big, so strong, so almost riotous in his personality,—the jovial if some-

times crusty Christopher, the hero of Ambrose's in fun and frolic and poetry; in real life an athlete who carried everything before him, as in literature he was one of the most daring of Free-Lances,—yet here wellnigh weeping over the dry tone, the distant air, the unkind manner of his publisher, proclaiming to heaven and earth—or at least to the saloon and the back-shop—the wrongs of his wounded soul; but writing himself into good-humour again, and a quite inconsequent prayer that nothing more might be said nor any allusion made to the subject. That all the floods of sentiment and indignation poured at intervals —if that unfortunate man of many toils and cares happened to look preoccupied, or the new number of the Magazine was not sent out hot from the press—upon his devoted head, should have driven Blackwood almost off his sober balance occasionally, would only have been natural. But probably because of these tragic and comic fluctuations, and the wonderful charm yet exasperation which lies in never knowing what the object of your thoughts will do next, the relationship of the publisher to his most potent and really indefatigable contributor was always as attractive as it was faithful and true. It was said that nobody but Mr Blackwood could manage the Professor; but the office was not a sinecure. It was one that required constant attention, watchfulness, and a great patience. I regret that the letters written in answer to these are not to be found; but perhaps it is really more expressive of Blackwood's attitude that he should here say nothing in reply to such objurgations and complaints. The accuser has it all his own way; but in his flurry gives a great advantage to the

silent partner, whose steadiness of character and manful composure seem to be emphasised by the silence. And it is no small testimony to both to say that, though these whimsical outbursts were repeated a hundred times, and though even Blackwood's temper—not a meek one—did sometimes when "much enforced give forth a hasty spark," yet that the steady affection and esteem with which they each regarded the other sustained no damage. The following letter is an expression of Mr Blackwood's sincerest feelings on this subject:—

All I shall say is that you have been the Genius and the Living Spirit which has animated the work, and whatever success it has had I owe most unquestionably to you in the first and chief place. I can most conscientiously declare that, wholly independent of the success of the work (to which your articles were always sure to contribute), I have felt a happiness in receiving your communications which to me was far beyond any considerations of personal advantage, and I had always more pleasure in paying you 100 gus. than any one else 50. The times are fertile in subjects, and your feeling and fancy are inexhaustible. I have much to say but I refrain. All I shall add is that there is nothing in this life I am so proud of as your friendship, and I hope and pray to God that it may continue while life lasts and with our children's children.

Professor Wilson lived to see three of Blackwood's sons in rotation assume the reins. He continued to kick sometimes now and then against the sway of the younger spirits; but he stood by them loyally through every change. And he was himself a sort of tutelary deity to the Blackwood house. His bust and portrait still stand leonine, with flowing mane, presiding over everything that goes on, as he did in his fine and careless person both in youth and age.

I may add here two letters of advice, both on poetical subjects; the first treating of the poetry of Mrs Hemans, then in her youth, and applauded to all the echoes in public, though not so enthusiastically in the freedom of private life:—

Professor Wilson to W. Blackwood.

I really do not know how I can advise you respecting Mrs H. It seems a case on which you alone can decide—to wit, whether her contributions are or are not worth the money.

My opinion, *on the whole,* is as follows: She is the best of our female writers of what is called Poetry. Her verses are often beautiful, always melodious, but—I think they should either be *all* accepted or *all* declined. For *none* of them that I have read are unworthy of a place in that department of a Magazine, as verses go — and she is a popular enough writer, entitled, I think, to that right. It would be offensive to her to have them returned; and I scarcely think *any of them* should be rejected. Are they then worth the money? Confound me if I know! To me they are not. But, I believe, to many readers they give much pleasure. They make an agreeable break, and they are generally pleasant reading. Besides, she was, I presume, flattered by their reception, and perhaps might feel hurt by being cut off, as well as injured by the loss of the coin. I am rather disposed to think you should go on with her; but I will converse with you about it, as it certainly is a point rather perplexing. It is surprising that she is not run out entirely, and dry as a whistle. Poetry is certainly a drug—but hers don't seem to disgust. I conclude my unsatisfactory epistle.

The second of these letters concerns a poem of Mr Aird, of whom Wilson thought more highly than of Mrs Hemans, though we doubt whether his high opinion has been confirmed. It is somewhat startling to think of the publication of a long and serious poem as a serial, much as that method of publication has developed since then.

John Wilson to W. Blackwood.

27 *Oct.* 1831.

To prevent any misunderstanding about Mr Aird's poem, I will mention what passed between him and me about it and the Magazine.

I said to him that in my opinion a Magazine was little the better or the worse for short copies of verses good or bad, and that a new feature in a magazine and a good feature would be the occasional introduction of a long poem, three or four times a-year. I think it would. Some months ago I read his poem and thought it possessed great power, as all his poems do: also much beauty.

A few days ago Mr Aird reminded me of what I said about long poems for the Magazine, and told me he had shown it to you, with a view of its being inserted if you liked it. I told him he had done right. With regard to prose contributions I told Mr Aird that I generally agreed with your judgment, so much so that I never thought of giving an opinion about them, except when asked to do so in a doubtful case; but that in poetry it was different: for that I held that no one could judge *perfectly well* of poetry but those who could write it: this is my opinion. I told him, therefore, that in cases of poetry, I considered myself to be a better judge than you, and that I had no objection to advise poetry to be inserted in the Magazine, even if it should not appear to you so good as it appeared to me, which I would not do in the case of prose.

I said this to him. I told him so in the belief that you might object to his poem on account of its peculiarities or other causes, more than I should do, although I did not doubt that you would appreciate its merits.

This is the cast and substance of our conversation, and I added that I would on the first opportunity speak to you about the poem. With regard to that poem or any other which Mr Aird will write, it will have strongly marked upon it certain peculiarities, and the question will be simply this, whether they are such as to exclude it or not from insertion in the Magazine.

In my opinion the merits are far greater than the defects:

and that a twenty-page poem, if showing power and genius, would be better in the Magazine than many a prose paper even of average ability or interest. That is to say, now and then.

To get long poems faultless, or free from great and many faults, is not easy. "The Jewess of the Cave" is not of the number. Still Mr Aird's poem may have in your eyes, looking at it with a view to all I have said, greater faults than in mine, and such faults as may make you decide, however reluctantly, against its admission. And if so, then I think you will be justified in not inserting it, notwithstanding my vote on the other side. Probably you may be of the opinion that long poems would not benefit the Magazine, however talented, unless such as would on the whole defy criticism, and be universally or very generally popular. To me it appears that such long poems would be seldom if ever got, and that, therefore, the idea of inserting long poems in the Magazine (as a new feature—now and then) will have to be relinquished, unless such are inserted whose merits overbalance their defects, however numerous and strong these may be.

This is a long story; but I have troubled you with it, that you may exactly understand my views in general. Consider these, and then judge from a careful perusal for yourself whether or not Mr Aird's poem fulfils the provisions of the new Act.

P.S.—This letter reminds me of De Quincey.

The letter does very much resemble De Quincey: much more than it resembles Wilson, in its elaborate balance of arguments and complete inconclusiveness. It is a curious question, and we can imagine Blackwood, who never had written any poetry, to have been somewhat confused by it, though probably he settled such matters summarily on the simpler issue, whether he liked a poem or not.

The negotiation about the publication of Wilson's

own collected poems, though of considerably earlier date, may be added. These poems have faded very much out of the popular memory, yet they had some reputation in their day.

J. Wilson to W. Blackwood.

26th April 1824.

With respect to my poems, I prefer writing a few lines to you, as I dislike conversations about money, although very fond of money itself.

My wishes are as follows, and my reasons for my wish are as follows:—

I wish you to take the copyright for two hundred and fifty guineas. You spoke of two hundred guineas, and in case of another edition a hundred more. It does not seem, therefore, that what I ask is anything much beyond your proposal.

The reason why I wish to sell you the copyright just now is neither more nor less than that I want money. For I ought to have had four hundred guineas from you had I done my duty in writing 'The Foresters' or any other volume — over this, a proposal for a new book, there would be no difficulty in settling at once; but really as to my poems I know not what may be their value to you, or whether what I now ask may be at all advisable for you to give. But the value of a thing is what it will bring the proprietor, and I could have considerably more than the two hundred and fifty guineas for the said copyright if I chose to be a *Dealer*, but that, of course, is not likely to happen. I wish the poems to be published by you, and to belong to you, and I have mentioned the terms.

The same day, this letter having evidently been answered at once, the Professor explains what seems the enigmatical character of a part of what had been said in it:—

Your acceptance of the terms proposed is prompt and friendly, and shall be considered such. The offer I allude to was as

follows: I was carelessly speaking of the worthlessness in the market of poetry such as mine, half in jest, half in earnest, and next morning a gentleman, who had been of the company, offered me four hundred guineas for the copyright of all my poems. I never thought of taking it, as I felt at the time it was meant as a handsome inducement for me to give that gentleman something else; neither did I then mention it to you, for, if I had, I thought it might either put you under the necessity of offering the same, which would have been unjust, or at least my speaking of having rejected an offer on your account, which would also not have been agreeable.

Things for me are much better as they are, and I hope, too, that neither will you suffer in any respect by your ready acquiescence in my proposal.

We have already remarked upon the extraordinary irregularities and delays that made the intercourse between the publisher and writer all through their long connection a constant succession of risks and alarms. There are sheaves of notes like the following in the correspondence:—

However painful to myself, and I fear also to you, I am obliged to give up the attempt to do a 'Noctes.' I have tried as earnestly as I could, and I cannot. If I could I would, on all accounts, my own as well as yours. I have sat up three nights till 3 o'clock and done nothing but utter heavy nonsense, which I have thrown into the fire; a bad 'Noctes' would do more harm than any one thing else. My mind has been incapable of doing what it was my most anxious wish to do; and that being the case truly, it must be put up with, and nothing said on the subject, except a hope that it will be otherwise next month, and any heaviness of this number redeemed then. It will pain me to see you annoyed at this. I will do what I can: nobody can do more.

For more than two months I have not had more than two entire days of anything like peace of mind. I cannot write

more on a subject so distressing. But till a fortnight or rather more, one hour's rest of mind or body has been rare to me. Mrs W.'s life was long in imminent danger, and her health is yet precarious. As for my own, I have suffered a great deal more than any one knows. But for the present no more. Two weeks ago I was beginning to get easy again, and began to do something; but John, my boy, was suddenly taken dangerously ill, and fainted so often that the medical men did not know what to make of it. If this, and more than this by far, does not excuse a man for being incapacitated for writing, what in God's name does?

As to my friendship, you have it as before; but I have not read a book or written a word, except lately three or four letters, since I came here. God only knows all I have suffered, and if you have been angry your anger has been misplaced.

Many of these notes are marked, being without date, with that of their reception by the publisher, written with an exasperated pencil, in all the eloquence of a protest and appeal to heaven and earth, like the following: "*Received at* 10 *o'clock at night, Dec.* 9." The day of publication was the 20th in those days, and the Professor had not yet put pen to paper:—

Tell Robert to call on me to-morrow on his way to the shop, and let me see exactly how things are.

Everything has conspired to make me useless; but I think things have been as bad before, and I shall furnish the articles manfully yet. The Homer (when done) may go in *anywhere*, and thus no time be lost.

This very night am I obliged to go out, else my daughter Margaret must stay at home from a party: I forgot it. Curse me if I do not get them done right, in spite of all the demons in Dulness' halls.

We fear that Blackwood, though very soft-hearted towards the maidens and their merry-makings, having

two of his own, would not be very indulgent towards Miss Margaret and her party, on that occasion at least.

These scraps of hasty letters take us behind the scenes, and let us see how hard it was to keep all in working order: and how doubly hard to drive a winged steed in the vehicle which is to carry your eggs to market, over all the rough roads and harsh macadam of the half-made ways. It is much steadier driving nowadays, when the teams are so much tamer, and the roads crushed smooth by endless merchandise. And yet perhaps it was a different rate of going, with all its risks and continual danger of upsetting, in the old heroic days.

It is not necessary here to enter into the details of Wilson's private history, which have already formed the subject of a biography—well and modestly done, so far as he was concerned, though with many mistakes in regard to other people—by his daughter; nor of his legend—the myth and tradition of Christopher North—his crutch, his convivialities, the symposia in which he was the chief figure, which originated in the earliest days of the Magazine, and continued so long. He lived to be an old man—one of the landmarks of the faithful city which has a knack of turning its favourites into demigods. A Norse demigod, not a Greek, was Wilson, with his yellow locks hanging about his great shoulders. It is one of the recollections of my early days to have been taken to see him—a young writer, much abashed with so novel a character—when he was near the end of his life. My companion and patron was Dr Moir, the gentle "Delta" of Blackwood, the well-beloved physician,

whom everybody delighted to honour. Professor Wilson came to us, large, and loosely clad, with noiseless large footsteps such as some big men have the gift of: his hair thin, which had been so abundant, and dimmed out of its fine colour, but still picturesquely falling about his ears, making a background for his still ruddy countenance. My friend said something, perhaps a little conventionally, about my modest achievement in literature, and that I must be warned against overwork. "No need of that," said Christopher; "so long as she is young and happy work will do her no harm." I have great difficulty in realising that the little person who gazed reverentially upon that majestic old figure, as upon one of the forefathers, judges, and lawgivers among men, had any connection with myself; but the picture remains very clear upon the mind, as though of yesterday—the two men, both transfigured in a pair of young eyes, the large old poet like a tower, and opposite to him the keen Scots professional man, clean shaved and closely shorn, genial and kind, with the glimmer of gentle poetry in him, which all the kind brethren swore by, though it was but a modest taper. Wilson by that time had almost ceased to work, yet not long before had published a belated series called 'Christopher under Canvas,' in which there were many fine pieces of poetical criticism, like diamonds among the rinsings of the mine: but the world had outgrown him by that time.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ETTRICK SHEPHERD.

AN INHERENT VANITY—A KIND PATRONESS—"A FREQUENT GUEST AT HIS GRACE'S TABLE"—AN UNCOMPROMISING CRITIC—"THE TENT"—JAMIE LAIDLAW'S PRAYER FOR COW WAT—AT ABBOTSFORD—LAIDLAW, HOGG, AND SCOTT—A UNIQUE USE TO MAKE OF A PUBLISHER—WRITING FOR ANOTHER MAGAZINE—A PRINTER'S FINE FEELINGS—THE MYSTERY OF THE FIFTY POUNDS—QUARRELS AND RECONCILIATION—'MAGA' BECOMES A SERIOUS PERIODICAL—A SHEPHERD WITHOUT ANY GUILE—A NEW WAY TO PAY OLD DEBTS—DELTA—"FEMININE PRIBBLE-PRABBLE"—THE SHEPHERD'S HOME—MRS HOGG.

It would be impossible in any record of 'Blackwood' to leave out the Shepherd, who, whatever he might be in himself, was one of the most characteristic figures in the group which brought it into being—as he also takes a very definite place, in his often rude and rustic individuality, in that which surrounds Scott. This is immortality enough, one would think, for such a man, and extreme and extraordinary promotion; but the Shepherd would not have thought so, who held his head as high as any, and thought himself badly treated, and was apt to babble about envy and injury, when the first place was not open to him. In his mature age Wilson (and indeed Lockhart too, and the other hands which worked at first on the 'Noctes')

gave him a fictitious importance in that brilliant record, putting the most beautiful speeches into his mouth, though sometimes, it must be added, holding him up on the keen spear of ridicule for the amusement of the world. But he gained much more than he lost, and the Shepherd is perhaps the personage who best survives through the mists which have closed over that laughing company, half fictitious, half genuine, a truly characteristic and individual figure, with his head often among the stars, though his feet are the devious heavy feet of a son of the soil. His appearances amid the mass of papers which have been collected respecting the origin and early history of the Magazine are manifold: in letters innumerable, but rendered of little use from the fact that they are very often about money, and the shifts and scrapes of his not very fortunate career; in songs, all, I presume, published at the time, but sunk into deepest oblivion now; in scraps of proofs, of manuscripts,—a *chiffonier's* heap of rubbish, in which survive a few relics which retain a likeness of the man. There is no want of information respecting James Hogg, for he himself published an Autobiography, the quite naïve and simple vanity of which is more remarkable than the facts narrated. "I must apprise you," he says in a prefatory note addressed to Scott, "that whenever I have occasion to speak of myself and my performances, I find it impossible to divest myself of an inherent vanity." The confession is made very complacently, as from one who knows and feels that he has occasion to be vain, and it is fully carried out in the pages that follow. He had scarcely begun to rhyme when "I told my friend, the Rev. James Nichol, that I had an inward

consciousness that I should yet live to be compared with Burns; and though I might never equal him in some things, I thought I might excel him in others." The friend "reprobated the idea"; but yet, when Hogg's first poem was made known to the world, the assumption did not perhaps seem so audacious, for there are passages in 'The Queen's Wake' which are of a delicate and visionary beauty, such as Burns never attempted. The poem of "Bonnie Kilmeny," for instance, in my own case one of the objects of a child's adoration, has still to my ear an exquisite sweetness and purity, a feeling which I think most readers must share.

Mr Blackwood's first connection with the Shepherd was, as we have seen, on the occasion of the failure of the publisher, an Edinburgh man, unknown except locally, who published 'The Queen's Wake.' Blackwood had acted as trustee in the bankruptcy of Goldie, and did his best to secure the amount of his just remuneration to Hogg, who seems even at that period to have already been an acquaintance at least, and who was also known to Constable, to whom he took his first volume. He himself reports a conversation of his with Constable on the subject, which shows something of the mingled familiarity and rudeness for which the Shepherd was afterwards distinguished. Constable very naturally asked to see the manuscript which he was requested to publish. "What skill have you about the merits of a book?" asked Hogg. "It may be so, Hogg," said he; "but I know as well how to sell a book as any man, which should be some concern of yours; and I know how to buy one, too!" Hogg, on the whole, made not a bad thing of 'The

Queen's Wake.' The particulars I have unfortunately mislaid: but so far as my recollection serves me, the sum realised was £240: which, indeed, as the profits on a small book of poetry,—well known as a generally unsaleable article, and which was his first introduction to the world,—was comparatively a large sum, and would, we think, dazzle a provincial poet now; but the age was one which, in the flush of a poetic revival, read much poetry, and, what is perhaps of more importance, bought it. Even at this beginning of his career Hogg was not a young man. "I was forty," he says, "before I wrote 'The Queen's Wake';" and he had already had sharp experience of life, having been a farm-servant, a shepherd, and a small farmer, one after the other. At the time his first poem was written he was a resident in Edinburgh; but soon after he was presented by the Duke of Buccleuch, in memory of the Duchess, who had died a short time before, with "the small farm of Altrive Lake, in the wilds of Yarrow." The Duchess had wished to give the poet a house, and this was the manner in which her husband carried out her wish. "In the letter he said, 'The rent shall be nominal'; but it has not even been nominal, for such a thing as rent has never once been mentioned." There was never a more pretty mode of patronage, nor a more touching way of paying regard to the wishes of the dead.

This gift enabled the Shepherd to resume the mode of life that was natural to him, and one of the first letters we find gives a very pleasant picture of the household and habits of the farmer-poet, to whom his poetry was not only a crown but a solid foundation, meaning at this period of life prosperity and honour,

as well as admission to a class of society quite inaccessible to any other man of his degree. "I was a frequent guest at his Grace's table," he says, "and as he placed me always next him on his right hand, I enjoyed a great deal of his conversation." Hogg's position at the Duke's right hand may perhaps require authentication; but he had unquestionably a still higher advancement, being received familiarly and kindly into his most intimate circle by Scott; and in the young group of the Blackwood men he was at first an important figure. The following letter is dated from his little farmhouse among the hills, August 12, 1816, before as yet the great enterprise of the Magazine had been taken up:—

James Hogg to W. Blackwood.

You may think me ungrateful in not writing to you as I promised, especially when you have been so mindful of me; but once you see how barren my letter is, you will think different. There is not an article here that can have any interest to a citizen; for though there are a number of blackcocks, muirfowl, &c., on our hills, there are such a crew of idle fellows (mostly from Edinburgh, I daresay) broke loose on them to-day, that it seems to a peaceful listener at a distance like me as if the French were arrived at the Forest. Yet all this, and everything I have it in my power to mention, you know must take place of course. In fact, the people of Edinburgh should always write to their friends in the country, and never expect any answer. For my part, I know that all the letters I ever received from the country while I was there were most insipid, nor can it otherwise be. We converse only with the elements, and our concerns are of the most trivial and simple nature. For my part, I feel myself so much at home here, and so much in the plain rustic state in which I spent my early years, that I have even forgot to think or muse at all, and my thoughts seem as vacant as the wilderness around me. I even wonder at some of my own past

ideas. I have neither written nor corrected a line since I left Edinburgh, and as I never intend returning to it for any length of time, I think I may safely predict without the spirit of prophecy that you have seen the best, and most likely all, of my productions that you ever will see. They have gained me but little fame and far less profit; and certainly the most graceful way of giving up the contest is to retire indignant into my native glens, and consort with the rustic friends of my early youth. This is no rhodomontade, my dear sir, but the genuine sentiments of my heart at this time. Do not, however, neglect to favour me still with a reading of all new works in my own way. I will return the 'Melodies,' but I will keep this and the future Nos. of the 'Review,' and you or Murray may debit me with it as cheap as you like. The 'Melodies' bear a few striking touches of a master's hand, but there are some of them feeble, and I think they must be Lady B.'s. She is not equal to Moore for *Melodies.* I am still harassed with visitors, most of them what you Edinburgh people would call *great skemps;* but there have been a few here whom I was truly glad to see, among whom I may mention Wilson, and Ballantyne[1] in Kelso, whom you know I very much admire: but though the weather was delightful, and though he testified the highest delight with the scenery of our lakes, he was not at all in his usual spirits. Pray let me hear from you on every emergency, if it were but two or three lines; the oftener the better. We have no post nor any carrier from this, and I neither know how nor when I am to get this letter carried. *Query,* Am I to get any new editions betwixt this and the New Year? Is 'The Thistle and the Rose' abandoned for ever?

The works that followed were scarcely so successful as 'The Queen's Wake,' and Hogg's letters are chiefly occupied by the announcement of ineffective volumes and negotiations for their publication. He was introduced to Mr Murray by Blackwood, and apparently raised an interest in the mind of that gentleman—who took a share with Mr Blackwood in several of his

[1] The Ballantynes began business in Kelso.

books, and was kind to the Shepherd, sending him books ('Emma,' for instance, which Murray considered likely to be a pleasing and profitable present to the Shepherd), and showing him much of the indulgent and good-humoured patronage which Hogg met with everywhere. Hogg himself was familiar and easy in his communication with all; and even the great Murray did not daunt the outspoken poet. But Blackwood was his chief dependence and closest friend. Here is a proposal, however, of a kind which we may be sure the publisher, who took so conscientious a view of his own responsibility, did not accept:—

My 'Cottage Winter Nights' is ready for the press: if you are for them, tell me. The conditions, of course, shall be of your own making for the first edition; but, as I want money particularly, I will give you the copyright for £63, 7s. per volume of 300 pages. The work consists of the Rural and Traditional Tales of Scotland. They are simple, carelessly and badly written, but said to be very interesting. "The Bridal of Balwood," which you read, is the longest tale; not the best, but a fair specimen. I tell you the honest truth, which you may depend on; but, to prevent you from plaguing me with alterations, you shall not see them till printed. Write me minutely about all these things. It is a great pity but that my poetry should have been published in three small neat volumes before this review had appeared. What the devil can be the risk in publishing 100 copies of the first vol., and 500 of each of the other two?

It would seem from the following letters, which were written in the summer of 1817, that at the period already described, when Blackwood was in the utmost trouble about the early series of the Magazine, and the two unsuccessful editors, Pringle and Cleg-

horn, Hogg was one of those to whom he appealed for help and sympathy, though, in the light of after-events, he seems an unlikely adviser. But at that period the Shepherd — the author of 'The Queen's Wake,' who had not yet committed himself to any of the futilities of his after-life, but was considered to have a fine career before him—had perhaps more weight than at any after-period. The freedom and boldness of his opinions are amusing: he had at least no doubt in his own mind as to his qualifications as a literary adviser:—

ALTRIVE LAKE, *August* 12, 1817.

My hay-harvest is but just commenced, and is this year large in proportion to the hands I have to work it. Next month the Highland cattle come, so that I cannot get to Edinburgh at present without incurring a loss, for which my literary labours, if they are as usual, would but ill remunerate me. I am greatly concerned about your Magazine; but I have some dependence on your spirit not to let it drop or relax till your literary friends gather again about you. Wilson's papers, though not perfect, have a masterly cast about them: a little custom would make him the best periodical writer of the age,—keep hold of him. I regret much that you have told me so little of your plan: if the name is to change, who is to be the editor, &c. For myself, I am doing nothing save working at hay, fishing, &c. Save two or three Hebrew Melodies, I have not written a line since I left Edinburgh. I cannot leave the country just now. *Crafty* always affirms that, of all classes ever he had to do with, the literary men are the worst and most ungrateful. I am very sorry to see this so often verified.

The next, which gives a lively picture of his own wellbeing, must have been written not very long after, though it is without date:—

I take the half of my last sheet of paper to write you a few lines, and implore of you not to insist on my coming to town

just yet. Believe me, you do not know what you ask. It is cruel in the extreme. Can I leave my fine house, my greyhounds, my curling-stones, my silver punch-bowl and mug, my country friends, my sister, and my sweetheart, to come and plunge into general dissipation? And, worst of all, can I leave Home, a house made by my own hand, and the most snug and comfortable that ever perhaps was made, to be a lodger in the house of another, my own ingle-cheek, dish, and night-gown, with my parents [waiting] assiduously on me—only to be a pest to others or to [pay] horridly for lodgings and keep the same establishment at home. I know it is all kindness and affection in you; but they are misdirected, for every one who wishes me to spend my life happily would wish me to spend it at home. Besides, I cannot take any hand in managing the publication, or pushing the sale of my own works. If delicacy even permitted it, I am the worst hand in the world to do such a thing. Further than the proofs, I can do nothing. You are right. The Magazine is a most excellent one. I never was so much diverted with anything as with the expedition to the Kirk of Shotts.

The next letter shows the very different *régime* which was now in operation, to which Hogg's advice was quite unnecessary, and himself sometimes treated with but scant courtesy, which, however, in the early days of the Magazine, and beginning of the wild pranks of the 'Noctes,' he had the discretion to take in very good part. It begins with an apology for not writing before a visit of Mr Blackwood's to London:—

James Hogg to W. Blackwood.

ALTRIVE, *October* 29, 1819.

I had nothing to write about that you did not know before. I knew you would make such arrangements with Murray about the Works, and Jacobite Relics, as you judged best for me; for though I am of late beginning to have some inward feelings of your remissness as a publisher, I have never had one of your truth and affection as a friend. I wrote a long letter to Wilson

on the subject of "The Tent"; though not a communication, it might be called a letter of localities, which he might have availed himself of. To my great regret that letter was lost. But really I had been so much mortified by the refusal of all my pieces that I cannot bear to think of writing for the Magazine now. And though I always praise it above all other periodical works, and wish it with all my heart every success, yet would I rather sit down and write for the shabbiest work in the kingdom, where everything I write is received. Indeed, I have always felt that to whatever I gave my desired adhesion, I might have disgraced myself, but my name now should not be a disgrace to any literary work.

I think that all my friends, without exception, think that the editors have dealt cavalierly with me in "The Tent" verses, and that their versification is meant to injure my literary character throughout. I have judged as impartially of the thing as I can, and I do not see it. I think it is excellent sport, and very good-natured sport besides. I might pretend to be angry—I could easily do that—but the truth is I am not. I do not see that the contrast between such an ignorant, blundering, good-natured fellow and his poetry can have anything but a good effect. I only wish the quiz on my worthy friend Dr Russell had been left out, as I am universally blamed for it here, and it is likely to cherish a good deal of ill-will among friends that were formerly so happy together.

The Shepherd did not always continue so good-natured. He complains somewhere, and one must feel with very good reason, of having ballads and verses of all kinds which he had never seen put into his mouth; and this indeed was hard, even if the verses—as possibly was the case—were better than his own. One little criticism creeps in even into the above good-natured letter: "With all their cleverness and carelessness of composition (which has generally, I think, a good grace), I cannot help feeling that the two last numbers are too egoistical, which never has a

good grace." This is very well said, though perhaps Hogg himself, the most egoistical of writers, was not the man to say it.

The following letter, addressed to Mr Blackwood, but the beginning of which has been changed from "Dear Sir" into "Dear Christopher," as if intended for publication, though it has no appearance of having gone through any printer's hands, may be quoted as a good specimen of Hogg in prose, in one of the rustic stories of which he afterwards printed so many, and which are now absolutely forgotten. It will show what was the realism of that early day in comparison with the present much-prevailing Literature of the Kailyard, as it has been aptly called. Hogg has nothing ornamental or sentimental in his unvarnished tale :—

I enclose you a very curious letter from a cousin-german of my own to his son, who still remains in this country. . . . The writer [Laidlaw] was a highly respected shepherd, and as successful as most men in the same degree of life; but for a number of years bygone he talked and read about America till he grew perfectly unhappy; and at last, when approaching his sixtieth year, actually set off to seek a temporary home and a grave in the New World: but some of his sons had formed attachments at home, and refused to accompany him.

He was always a singular and highly amusing character, cherishing every antiquated and exploded idea in science, religion, and politics. He never was at any school, and what scraps of education he had obtained had been picked up by himself. Nothing excited his indignation more than the theory of the earth whirling round on its axis and journeying round the sun: he had many strong logical arguments against it, and nailed them all with Scripture. When he first began to hear tell of North America, about twenty years ago, he would not believe that Fife was not it! and thought he saw it from the

Castlehill of Edinburgh. I remember, and always will, a night that I had with him about nineteen years ago. He and one Walter Bryden, better known by the appellation of Cow Wat, along with James Hogg, the celebrated Ettrick tailor, and myself, were together in a little change-house one evening. After the whisky had begun to operate, Laidlaw and Cow Wat went to loggerheads about [free] will, on which their tenets of belief totally differed. The dispute was carried on with such acrimony on both sides that Wat had several times heaved his great cudgel, and threatened to knock his opponent down. Laidlaw, perceiving that the tailor and I were convulsed with laughter, joined us for some time with all his heart; but all at once he began to look grave, and the tear stood in his eye. "Ay, ye may laugh," said he; "great gommerals! it's weel kent ye are just twae that laugh at everything that's good. You have mair need to pray for the puir auld heretick than laugh at him, when you see he's on the braid way that leads to destruction. I'm really sorry for the puir auld scoondrel, and troth I think we sude join and pray for him. For my part I sal lend my mite." With that he laid off his old slouched hat, and kneeled down on the floor, leaning forward on a chair, where he prayed a long prayer for Cow Wat, as he familiarly termed him, when representing his forlorn case to his Maker. I do not know what I would give now to have a copy of that prayer. It was so cutting that before the end Wat rose up, foaming with rage, heaved his stick, and cried, "I tell ye, gie ower, Jamie Laidlaw; I winna be prayed for that gate." If there were different places and degrees of punishment, he said, as the auld hoary reprobate maintained—that was to say, three or four hells—then he prayed that poor Cow Wat might be preferred to the easiest ane. We couldna expect nae better a place for sic a man, and indeed we would be ashamed to ask it. But, on the ither hand, continued he, if it be true that the object of our petitions cheated James Cunningham and Sandy o' Bowershope out of from twa to three hunder pounds o' lamb-siller, why we can hardly ask such a situation for him; and if it be further true that he left his ain wife, Nanny Stothart, and took up with another (whom he named, name and surname), really we have not the face to ask any mitigation for him at a'.

The tailor and I, and another—I forget who it was, but I think it was probably Adie o' Aberloch—were obliged to hold Wat by main force upon his chair till the prayer was finished.

Whether this letter and the other which it enclosed shared the fate of all the "pieces" which were so remorselessly refused by the authorities of the Magazine, we cannot tell; but we find presently that Hogg had been transferring his works to another publisher without Mr Blackwood's knowledge, a practice which seems not to have been unusual with him. It would seem that Blackwood had remonstrated, and the Shepherd replies as follows. The manner in which, in defending himself against that just wrath, he suddenly introduces a hot blast of his own grievances, is clumsily skilful in its use of a well-known artifice:—

James Hogg to W. Blackwood.

I do not know how to answer your letter: it has put me in my ill-humour. I see no right you nor the nearest friend has to interfere with my bargains with other men. It is a maxim with the trade to monopolise every author whom they once publish a book for, and that no other man may take a share on any conditions. If you do not remember the transaction of refusing to take 'The Mountain Bard' into the proposals for the small edition of my works, I do, which is quite sufficient for my purpose. I pressed the works on Boyd, so that he is blameless, and intend to give him, or rather the Company, more, as soon as I have them at command. I never doubted either your honour or your friendship, but friendship will not sell my editions. Oliver & Boyd have sold 1500 copies of my tales in five months, and have already given me a letter for the price of the next edition. One cannot help making comparisons in their own mind. If you are really my friend, will you not allow me this, that if Oliver & Boyd sell more of 'The Mountain Bard' in one year than you and your London friends do of 'The

Queen's Wake' in seven, will you not allow that I do right in letting them have such editions as suit their sale?

I am almost rueing the day that I ever saw you. I have had letters, newspapers, and magazines poured in upon me from every part of the country. No one has any right to publish aught in my name without consulting me. I cannot be embroiled with the public in this way, and far less right have others to intermeddle thus publicly with what liberties I think proper to allow my friends. It is confoundedly hard that I should be made a tennis-ball between contending parties. If you can find out by the write or otherwise who the shabby scoundrel is that writes the enclosed, pray return it to him in a blank cover.

Remember, never more mention to me my bargain with any others. I will bargain with whom I please and when I please, and for you to tell me your mind on such a subject was anything but friendly, especially a work which you never had any connection with, and never wished any.

But, alas! the Shepherd's high-handed loftiness of tone soon breaks down in an urgent plea in respect to a fifty pounds which, whether it is due to him or not, as an advance upon future work, or on account of profits reckoned upon with much more confidence by author than by publisher, is at least very much wanted. Blackwood was on the eve of a journey to London, and "if you go away I may be left in the lurch, having no other certain resource." It would appear to have been Murray who ought to have paid this fifty pounds, and there is repeated discussion whether Mr Scott should be asked to write to him, or Mr Blackwood to speak to him, which the latter declines to do. "I dare not let you away without making sure of the cash," says Hogg. This fifty pounds, or another, is always cropping up to pull the Shepherd's spirits down, or to make him feel

with greater bitterness the want of confidence shown in his gifts and in his power to please the public. For he was no thrifty Scot, unfortunately for himself, any more than Burns was, or, on a larger argument, Scott himself, the leader and head of his generation. It is curious, indeed, how little this supposed national characteristic appears in the greatest of Scotsmen, though we should not attempt to place Hogg in that category. The Shepherd was always in sore need of that fifty pounds.

Here, however, is a sketch in the first year of the Magazine, in a letter dated from Abbotsford, of a happier record. At that moment he was no neglected contributor, but, to his own consciousness, putting a powerful shoulder to the wheel, in cheerful confidence of being no insignificant member of the team. We think he had some hand in the suggestion of Will Laidlaw as one of the regular staff. And the glimpse he affords us of that homely workman, and of the kind master's hand which trimmed up and put in order the monthly Chronicle supplied by Laidlaw, is attractive and delightful:—

Along with Scott's and Laidlaw's contributions to your miscellany, I also enclose my mite, a little Hebrew melody, which was written for a London work, but not yet published. Perhaps I may get my tale finished likewise before I leave this, which I will forward; but now when I see so much good original matter here I am not anxious. I actually pop'd in on Mr Scott on Saturday in the very act of toiling for you, uncompanionable being that you are, taking up all the poets and men of genius in the country peddling at your small hardwares! I have spoken to Laidlaw and Scott, both separately and together, about the detail business of the Magazine. The former is perfectly willing to do either way, but thinks that

with a little attention on your part in forwarding papers, fixed instructions, &c., he might do it well enough, and he appears to me to be taking a good deal of pains to that. If the Register is defective, I will scarcely think it his blame. Scott spoke with so much impatience of it that I did not think meet to dwell on the subject. My own opinion is, since an arrangement between you is understood to exist, it should stand as it is for a season or a volume: at least it looks so unstable to propose alterations by the time things are well begun. If Scott sees the least symptom of your neglect of Laidlaw, I find he is off at a tangent at once; and it is not only that the want of his support would injure your work, but what his name would effect in your opponent's: policy is requisite even with the greatest heroes. Now that Laidlaw has furnished one anecdote of the shepherd's dog, mine will follow better next month. Go on with my Tales, so that I may not say you will not publish anything. If any sheets require to be sent to me, send them under cover to the Duke of Buccleuch.

The reader will see by reference to a previous chapter how little need there was for Hogg's supposed *ménagement*, and how simply Scott himself treated the difficulty of Laidlaw as to the monthly Register. The anecdote of the shepherd's dog referred to, and which has been already noted in these pages, is a piece of admirable composition, bearing very clear marks of the master's hand. In a postscript to this letter Hogg adds:—

I spoke to Scott of our plan of an octavo edition of the works. He is decided on the plan, and thinks it should be put about immediately. He wishes for one copy of his prospectus before he writes the new advertisement, which please forward to him by next coach, reminding him shortly of the purpose for which it is sent, or he may forget it among so many concerns.

This refers to a subscription edition of Hogg's works, which had been projected some time before. It had been originally intended to be printed in two volumes, but Murray strongly advised one as more saleable. The printed prospectus for the original scheme had therefore to be changed on this suggestion, and I have the amended prospectus, half printed, supplemented with a further advertisement in Scott's handwriting, pressing the Shepherd's claims. Thus, writing an article for one humble friend, drawing out the prospectus of another, cordial with both as a brother, we see Scott's benign shadow behind these two rustic writers, backing up both. Both of them liked to surround him with a halo of the unapproachable: Hogg finding him impatient, ready to start off at a tangent; Laidlaw professing himself afraid to bring some point of detail under his notice —while he, unconscious, and much the most ready to understand of all, gently brushes these cobwebs away. Scott appears constantly as the adviser and helper of the Shepherd, sometimes giving him advice that is not palatable, sometimes backing him up with the most friendly steadfastness. There is mention in another letter of a book, "a romance," which Hogg desires to publish anonymously:—

James Hogg to W. Blackwood.

And if you did not really consider it an object to you, I would rather have it in some respectable company's hands in London. I not only think that you make your general publishing a very subordinate consideration, but I do not like to have all my ventures, however small, in one hand. I was down on a long visit at Fleurs, Kelso, Abbotsford, &c., and saw a good deal of Scott. I told him of my work and

of my plan, but he did not approve of it. He asked if you had dealt honourably by me? I said always like a brother; but I feared that you were so much engaged with your miscellany that you were careless as a publisher. This he would not admit of. A man's own interest, he said, would improve that: and finally said, if my work was an object to you, as my friend you should have it; if not, he would assist me in making any bargain. I do not suspect you, my dear friend, in that sense. I know that 'The Brownie' should have gone through more editions than either two or three. I have been assured of it again and again by gentlemen that had no interested motive in saying so, and who know better than either you or me. One gentleman told me that from the interest with which it was first read in London he considered it would have sold as well as any novel ever published; but that the work appeared to all men to have been suppressed, and was never yet to be had in a shop in England. I beg you will not mention this work to any one living, as I mean to send it to press in a different handwriting, and positively to deny it. But as I never met with anything but candour and truth from you, I am resolved not to do anything underhand.

I wish you would publish the Jacobite Songs, and really let folk hear a little of the works you are going to publish and have published, if it were only on the cover of a Magazine. It will not do merely to get them printed and make Lesley bring them up in large bales to the shop. Mine are carefully kept out of all your lists. But enough of reflection: a dull author, I am aware, always blames his publisher. I have looked over the Magazine, which is a very commonplace one.

A second letter on the same subject shows still more fully the confidence of Hogg in the good-nature of the publisher whom he wishes to deprive of the advantage of producing his book, but who magnanimously takes in hand to procure another bookseller for him:—

As the carrier has missed a week, I have time to add a few words more to those enclosed. There is really scarce a practic-

ability of correspondence with any part of the world from this place, and to me it has no other fault whatever.

I really would like better that my book were published in London, because my bookseller and stile are so well known that I may as well put my name to it as publish it with you. I do not know about the transaction. I myself will never try to do it, and I take it very kind in you offering your experienced hand, though it is only of a piece with all your doings formerly. It is, however, somewhat ticklish. Should I trust it solely to Mr Scott, it would be conducted through the medium of Ballantyne, and would likely fall into hands I should not like, most probably Hurst & Robinson. I might as well give up all previous connections and publish it at home. With Murray and Cadell or Davies I should be in the same scrape as with yourself. I really think, then, that you should try your hand with Longman & Co., and if you cannot arrange matters, we shall try what can be done some other way. Be sure you keep them in the dark: I would not even tell them the name, but merely that it is a Romance or Tale of Chivalry, in two volumes, descriptive of the characters of the English and Scots Borderers in ancient times. I remember of having a letter once from Longman & Co., wherein they stated one-sixth to be their proportion of the author's profits, but that, indeed, was on a small edition. However, I leave this entirely to yourself. If you think proper to do this, the sooner you begin the correspondence the better, as I would like to have everything ready for throwing it off in the spring when I am in town.

This perhaps is a unique instance of the employment of one publisher to arrange terms with another for the publication of a book. The book in question was probably one called 'The Three Perils of Man,' published by Messrs Longman, apparently in 1822. "Lord preserve us! what a medley I made of it! for I never in my life rewrote a page of prose," says Hogg in his Autobiography; "and being impatient to get hold of some of Messrs Longman's money or

their bills, which were the same, I dashed on, and mixed up with what might have been one of the best historical tales our country ever produced such a mass of *diablerie* as retarded the main story, and rendered the whole perfectly ludicrous." Blackwood, it is clear, was well out of the undertaking, but it was not wholly unprofitable to the Shepherd, who received "one hundred and fifty pounds for the edition of one thousand copies as soon as it was put to the press." Another work, entitled 'The Three Perils of Woman,' seems to have had a similar measure of success.

All this press and eagerness of publication was intended to install Hogg in the new and larger farm of Mount Benger, which eventually ruined him, so far as a man in his position, with so little need for keeping up appearances, and so buoyant a spirit, could be ruined. He had the same object in his volume of Jacobite Relics, which was undertaken by Messrs Blackwood and Murray, and about which he writes a great many letters. Here is another characteristic grumble. It is evidently written on the occasion of one of Mr Murray's visits to Scotland, when he was at Abbotsford, and engaged with a greater than Hogg. The Shepherd never was able to see any reason why he himself and his concerns should not be always interesting:—

James Hogg to W. Blackwood.

I was vexed that I got so little cracking with Murray. Scott and he had so many people to crack about, whom nobody knows ought about but themselves, that they monopolised the whole conversation. Tell me seriously, is the sale of my Tales really sticked, that neither of you will mention them, either by writing

or word of mouth? There is surely no impropriety in my making this inquiry.

Poor Hogg by this time, however, had grown into a general sense of injury with all the world. The free use made of his name in all the jests of the Magazine was quite enough to inflame a man of his temper, feeling himself at a disadvantage, even through the tough armour of his self-conceit. He threw forth freely complaints, criticisms, and threats. On one occasion he desires that various articles he had sent should be returned to him:—

I have been quizzed too much by your chaps already; I will not so easily take again. I am writing for another Magazine, with all my birr, and intend having most excellent sport with it, as the editors will not understand what one sentence of my celebrated allegories mean till they bring the whole terror of Edinburgh aristocracy upon them. For the soul that is in your body mention this to no man living. You have quite forgot to send me a newspaper. I care not though they lie two or three days in the shop. A Saturday paper is soon enough to me by Wednesday's post, or a Wednesday paper by the Saturday one. There are some very able papers in the last Magazine, but I do not think the selection likely to add much to its popularity.

On another occasion:—

This last number is not near so interesting as the former: there is too much of pompous fine writing in it, at least attempts at it. Such papers as that declamatory one on the state of parties are not the kind of political papers that will stand the test. But enough of that which is not agreeable: no wonder that I begin to feel a cold side to a work which holds such an avowed one to me.

An amusing little quarrel seems to have taken place about Hogg in the summer of 1821, which, as it shows something of the publisher's attitude, and is in itself

a curious little passage of arms, may be given here. Hogg's Autobiography, a work very offensive to many persons, and open to the severest criticism, had been commented on very freely, and certainly with no delicacy of treatment, in the Magazine. James Ballantyne was at the time the printer employed by Blackwood. And here is his protest against the coarse and unlovely fun of the article. We imagine it would startle the publishers of to-day, almost as much as Balaam was startled by an unlooked-for remonstrance, did there proceed from any printing-office charged with their work an indignant appeal like this:—

James Ballantyne to W. Blackwood.

Do you really mean to insert that most clever but most indecently scurrilous attack upon Hogg? For my own part, I do not stand up for Hogg's conduct; but such language as is applied to him appears to me absolutely unwarrantable, and *in your Magazine* peculiarly and shockingly offensive.

You will do as you think best certainly; but I must at once say that if it goes in I must withdraw, in all subsequent numbers, from the concern. How much I shall regret this on many accounts I need not say; but I cannot allow such an article to appear with even my implied approbation attached to it. It is hard, you may think, that an editor should be fettered by his printer; but I cannot help this. The printer must not be made to encounter what he considers to be disgrace.

Mr Blackwood immediately replied as follows:—

W. Blackwood to James Ballantyne.

The article on Hogg is to be very much altered indeed, else you may depend upon it that *I* could not allow it to appear. But really of this you must permit me to be judge, for, disagreeable and unpleasant as it would be for us to part, I cannot submit to be told what *I must not insert* in the Magazine. My character and interest are at stake, and you may depend upon

it that nothing will appear in the Magazine but what it will be both for my credit and interest to publish, and, of course, for you to print.

While I feel myself obliged to say this, I beg to assure you that nothing will give me greater pleasure than to receive any remarks from you at all times. As a friend, I will value them, as you know that no man is more open to reason than I am; but as your favourite Bard says, "Not upon compulsion, Hal."

All I shall add is, that I hope we shall never have two words of difference upon this or any other subject that will be unpleasant to either of us.

But Signor Aldiborontiphoscophornio could not let well alone:—

James Ballantyne to W. Blackwood.

Surely, my dear sir, I never could say or hint that you were not the sole and irresponsible judge of what is to be inserted in your own Magazine? Certain it is, at least, that I had no intention to convey any such absurd meaning, and I hereby disclaim it as strongly as possible. All that I meant to say was—and surely the earlier and the more explicitly it was said the better—that I regarded the article on Hogg, as it at present stands, as of such a nature that if it were published in its present shape I could not continue to be the printer. This, you are aware, is only exerting in my own case that power of judging and deciding which every man of independence must exert in order to secure the continuance of his independence.

I assure you, my dear sir, I am far too well aware of the value of your employment and confidence hastily or rashly to forfeit it; and I think nothing is more likely than that in most cases that regard the feelings of honourable minds we shall agree; and I truly rejoice that great alterations are to be made in the article. You will allow that it needs them.

This ill-judged attempt to have the last word, and show his superiority, brought down the following thunderbolt upon Ballantyne's head. It is dashed off

in a hurry, the *brouillon*, according to Blackwoodian custom, hot and strong, being written upon the back of the culprit's letter:—

W. Blackwood to J. Ballantyne.

All that I have to say in answer to your note, which I have this moment read, is that if your former letter meant anything, it certainly meant that you were to be the judge of what it was fitting for you to print. And while I think it is right and proper for every man to reject or retain any employment that may be offered to him, it quite revolts against all my feelings to be placed in such an alternative as you so positively announce to me in your letter. What I would have reckoned both kind and proper of you at any time was to tell me when any article struck you as objectionable, both on your account and my own; and if you then found me unreasonable, or thought at any rate I was so, and that you would be injured even by printing such a thing, though no way responsible as publisher, you could then act as you thought best. But really, in the first instance, to tell me plump that you must decline, &c., does not appear to me like what I should have expected from you.

However, nothing more need be said.

Ballantyne seems to have conquered any desire he may have had to reply, and everything went on as before: but the little exhibition of character on both sides—the one, conscious of being no common printer, a little showy and explanatory, bent on flourishing his flag, the other decisive in cutting it down—affords an amusing episode. It is referred to in a letter from Blackwood to Hogg further on. The article in question was published, with a note appended from Christopher North, to the effect that it was all a joke, and possibly written by the Shepherd himself—which, we presume, was intended to be conciliatory. But fortunately it is not at all necessary to enter into so

unattractive a subject. It adds, however, a fine variety to the too common situation to see behind the wild wits in the foreground and the clown of genius red and resentful in his clumsy exasperation—the plain man behind holding the reins, not without a strain and effort, and rather glad upon occasion to let loose his own provoked feelings upon any chance objector who came in his way.

We have said there was always a £50 which on some account or other Hogg was convinced that either Mr Blackwood or Mr Murray owed him, and which he was bent on extracting from the former, either directly or by a letter to be written by him to Murray. The transaction had been repeated so often, now on one ground, now on another, that the reader by degrees comes to think of it as a sort of floating property upon which the Shepherd could always calculate, which he called in from time to time, yet could always go back upon, finding it perennially available. We have little doubt that this had grown to be Hogg's own view. And he was always in want of £50. He was so constantly in want of it, and so many chances had occurred, softenings on the part of Blackwood, impulses of careless generosity on the part of Murray, to procure it for him, that he went on asking for it with a degree of innocency that obliterated the real facts of the case altogether. But a publisher's temper and nerves were not invulnerable any more than those of other men; and whether it was that the claim was less warranted than usual, or that Blackwood was completely tired out by its repetition, it is evident that he was moved to make a stand against it from time to time. Hogg's letters are the most curious

medley of entreaty, remonstrance, and abuse, the latter predominating even when he had a favour to ask. We need not go more closely into the correspondence, which on this particular subject is voluminous: discussing in detail the ground upon which the claim is founded, the desirability, if not of paying it forthwith, at least of writing to somebody who must pay it: along with that perennial grievance of the author who cannot understand how it is that his books do not pay, and is convinced that some wickedness of the publisher, false accounts, or indolence in pushing, or a small edition instead of a larger one, or utter indifference to the success of a given book altogether, is the cause of it. Mr Blackwood's replies to a great many of these troublesome demands become at last very decided though still friendly. Hogg, it will be seen, was very critical concerning other publications which were more fortunate than his own:—

W. Blackwood to James Hogg.

15*th May* 1821.

It is very odd, indeed, that Mr Murray has paid no attention to your letters. I would be very happy if it were in my power, but I regret that at present it is not, for as to interfering in any way with Mr Murray, it is a thing that I could not think of doing. It would also be very indelicate in me to apply to Sir Walter Scott, who, if he were to do you the favour to make any advance on Mr Murray's account, would most certainly expect you to apply to him direct yourself and not through another. At the same time, you cannot say that Mr Murray is due you more than the £50 on account of 'The Queen's Wake,' for it depends upon the copies sold what may be due for 'The Brownie.' . . . If Sir Walter would write to him, I am sure he would not refuse to settle. I think you might draw a bill upon Mr Murray for 'The Queen's Wake,' and send it through a banker, writing him at the same time that you have done so. This

he would surely honour, and it would not trouble Sir Walter—a thing concerning which there can be no dispute or objection. It is with regard to 'The Brownie' that you require Sir Walter's assistance.

As to giving you any assistance myself I am very sorry I cannot, for just now I have fully as much to do as I can well manage. You know I never in my life before refused you any money you ever asked from me, and therefore I hope you will excuse me for once.

I am surprised at your having such a very humble opinion of the 'Parish Annals,' but I am happy to tell you that it is very differently estimated by Mr Henry Mackenzie, Sir Walter Scott, Professor Wilson, Mr Lockhart, and fifty others, who are all loud in its praises. I am also happy to say that you are mistaken as to its sale, for in three or four days there were nearly 500 copies sold in London, and I have already sold here nearly 400 copies. In short, I have seldom published a more popular or valuable book.

I do not understand what you allude to when you say I let men of real genius slip through my fingers. I should be much obliged to you if you would tell me what you mean.

Mrs B. desires me to say that she thinks you are improvident in giving the young Christian two names, for you may perhaps, like us, run out of laddies' names. She begs to be remembered kindly to Mrs Hogg.

This note, uneasily severe, redeemed by the amusing touch of family kindness at the end, shows the struggle with very natural resentment which was going on in Blackwood's breast. In the next his sentiments are more distinct and precise :—

W. Blackwood to James Hogg.

June 6, 1821.

Yesterday I received yours of the 2nd. As you say you had mislaid my letter, I conclude that you have forgotten its contents, else you would not have said that I wrote "snapping at

you." I wrote to you simply and fairly that I consider it would be most indelicate of me to apply to Sir Walter, who, if he were inclined to do you a favour, would naturally expect you should apply for it yourself. I think so still, and so will any one who knows anything of the world or of common-sense. As to interfering with Mr Murray, I have told you all along it is a thing which I cannot do. . . . You should write to Sir Walter Scott, and if he would have the goodness to apply to Mr Murray for you, I have no doubt that he would get the accounts of 'The Brownie' closed with me, and whatever balance was due to you would be immediately paid.

I must tell you frankly you need not have made such a supposition as that I had resolved to withdraw from you my confidence and friendship. I have never made any professions to you, either in words or by writing, but what you have had the most substantial evidence of their truth and sincerity. You never in your life asked anything from me but what I instantly granted, if in my power. You thought others could be of more use to you; and though I might have expected a little consideration for my feelings, if not for what I had done for you, yet you know this made no alteration in my conduct towards you; and I settled all our transactions as if nothing of the kind had occurred, and in a way which you were satisfied was highly liberal. It is most painful to me to allude to any of these things, and I never wish to think of them; but you force me to do so, by your seeming to expect that I should again make you advances of money. This I really cannot afford to do, and I hope you will be satisfied that in present circumstances you should not expect it.

According to your desire I called last night at Mr Grieve's, but found, most unfortunately, that he had gone to the country. I was very sorry for this, as I have never heard a syllable from him with regard to the bond of credit. I am as willing as ever to be security for the sum you proposed, provided, as I told you, that Mr Grieve approves of it, and sees that it is really to be useful to you.

The bond of credit referred, as the Scottish reader will perceive, to the standing credit with his banker,

which, when guaranteed by solvent persons, it is the system of the Scottish banks to give. It is also the traditionary means by which in many a story, and alas! in many incidents in real life, the unfortunate surety is ruined; but it still ranks in Scotland, we believe, as a service which a man can reasonably ask of his friends. Blackwood was surety to the Bank for James Ballantyne, and also for Hogg, and probably many more.

The quarrel went on in a way which is almost *de rigueur* between author and publisher—Hogg asserting that 'The Brownie' ('Brownie of Bodsbeck,' a collection of tales published by Blackwood and Murray which had not been successful—but this the author was naturally unwilling to believe) was to appear in an edition of 2000; Blackwood calmly proving by enclosure of the printer's account that it was nothing of the kind: Hogg insisting that by means of this mistake he had written imperatively to Mr Murray, and been "too precipitate"; Blackwood replying that the mistake was entirely his own.

> It is a great misfortune to you [adds the publisher] that you allow your imagination to run away with your memory, and then, after allowing your mind to dwell on your own fancies, you positively assert them as truths. I am glad I have it in my power to put you right in a way you cannot dispute; but it is the first time I have been under the necessity of bringing forward a printer's account to substantiate any of my statements, either with authors or with any of my correspondents.

The correspondence after this becomes involved with other persons—a banker in Galashiels, who was to have retained in his hands a bill which was to be

applied in payment of another bill,—an involved negotiation, of which it is as difficult as wholly unnecessary to follow through the weary evolution,—and who advised Hogg that Mr Blackwood was "making a great deal of unnecessary fuss," an intimation which Mr Blackwood naturally resented. Hogg's utter confusion of mind, as he endeavours to thread his way through the convolutions of a series of transactions quite beyond his capacity, is half pathetic and half laughable:—

James Hogg to W. Blackwood.

I said I knew nothing about the routine of such business as how far an agent was entitled to give up any security he had received; but I begged that at all events he would satisfy you in the meantime until I could see you. Mr Craig, though a most honourable and disinterested man, is noted for a sort of stubborn perverseness when in the least crossed; and what may make him more cautious, perhaps, he has advanced me money for the other two-thirds of the bill on his own acceptances. I had lifted all my money and paid it away for stock (so we term live stock), so that I could not relieve your bill, else I should have done it this day; for after you had given me your name so frankly to let me get the immediate use of that which was my own, you may guess how grieved I was at all this anger and jealousy, which was perfectly preposterous, for what effect has a letter on a bill?

Poor Shepherd! what, indeed, had any of his explanations or complaints to do with that remorseless course of affairs which ordains that a man who has promised to pay should do so, whatever arguments, even of the most convincing character, he should be able to produce against it. This piteous letter, however, did have the effect on the bill which was so

improbable; for Mr Blackwood, in a very long and impatient letter, in which he announces that "it is from your total ignorance of business that you think I have made any fuss about this bill," ends by giving it up in despair. "I hope," he says, "from this explanation that you will see the thing in its proper point of view. All I have to add on this matter is that you need give yourself no further trouble about this bill in the meantime. I hope the money will be of use to you."

One more letter follows. It begins sternly :—

W. Blackwood to James Hogg.

SIR,—You are so utterly ignorant of business that it is quite unnecessary for me to attempt to show you how completely you have misunderstood everything. . . . As to the very ludicrous affair of a prosecution I say nothing. The very idea of such a thing certainly does "astonish" me, as it will every one who may happen to hear of it.

Thus the connection which had been so long and so kind would seem to have come to an end. So at first sight of these letters the writer believed: and so it did—for half a year,—at the end of which time Hogg appears again unconquerable, with something which he thinks "either of two friends whom you know" could make "glorious sport" out of; and which he sends to his dear Ebony, some one else whose name is undecipherable having "positively refused to take it on the score of sheer terror." Mr Blackwood's letter in reply, we are glad to say, goes back to "Dear Hogg," and the old terms of friendship, though he is not tempted by the "glorious sport" :—

W. Blackwood to James Hogg.

24*th May* 1822.

On coming home four days ago I was glad to see your letter and article. I regret that we cannot make use of it, from its having been previously offered to your friend. Besides, we have had quite enough of Jeffrey and the 'Edinburgh Review' lately. Your idea is an excellent one, and many parts of the article are very happily executed. Had it been put into certain hands some months ago, nothing could have answered better. Along with 'Maga' I send Mrs Hogg 'Lights and Shadows,' 'The Provost,' and 'Gillespie's Sermons.'

The literary connection, however, was not quite so easy to renew as the kindnesses. Hogg had not outgrown the age of glorious sport, when to bait an unfortunate victim and pursue him about the world for the laughter of the reader was the inspiration of the moment; but the Magazine, not any longer a dashing and reckless adventurer, but a very important undertaking, meaning both fame and fortune, had outgrown it. The Shepherd desired to return to the days of the Chaldee Manuscript; but these days were as completely over as if a hundred years had elapsed. His appearance with his new satire, and his softened tone, both of criticism and of friendship, make the following letter interesting:—

Altrive Lake, *June* 14, 1822.

I have revised and rewritten "John Paterson's Mare," which I send you for publication in the M., as No. I. of an allegorical history of our miscellaneous literature. I cannot conceive, even with its previous faults, why your editors rejected it, for I am sure that a more harmless good-natured allegory was never written. It is, besides, quite unintelligible without a key, which should never be given. I think it will be next to the Chaldee in popularity, as it is fully as injurious. You are at

liberty to alter any of the names you do not like: your own, for instance, I took merely because oak was a black wood, which may be construed differently.

I think very highly of both the books you have sent me, but far most highly of 'Lights and Shadows,' in which there is a great deal of very powerful effect, purity, and sentiment, and fine writing, but with very little of real nature as it exists in the walks of Scottish life. The feelings and language of the author are those of romance: still it is a fine and beautiful work. I send you the accompanying article merely as a token that I have forgiven all that is past, and that I wish all bygones to be bygones between us for ever. I cannot bear to live on terms of utter estrangement with a man from whom I experienced so many repeated kindnesses and obligations. There is no man so apt to err in judgment as I am, but I trust none of my friends shall find my heart wrong.

Mr Blackwood's reply pointed out very decidedly the particular points of difference to which we have referred—the advancement of the Magazine in seriousness and sobriety, and the stationary character of the belated contributor, to whom there was no triumph higher than that of the Chaldee Manuscript. The publisher writes, with mingled consideration and superiority:—

W. Blackwood to James Hogg.

EDINBURGH, 18*th June* 1822.

I have read "John Paterson's Mare," and I have laughed very heartily at many parts of it. I feel much obliged to you for sending it. I should be happy if you found it agreeable to you to give your aid to 'Maga,' as I am sure it would be both pleasant and advantageous to you. I am sorry, however, that "John Paterson's Mare" cannot be accepted of. On this you will probably fall into a great passion; but I cannot help it, as I am convinced such an article could do neither yourself nor me any credit. In the first place, the whole affair about Pringle and Cleghorn is entirely forgotten, and it would be

like slaughtering the long ago dead and buried. In the next place, Constable has long been away from business and in bad health: and being your publisher, it would neither be good taste nor good feeling in you to attack him or any of his concerns. Your worst enemy could not desire a fitter occasion for running you down than your publishing what would be cried out upon as a vile personal attack, &c., &c. For as to no key being given, that is sheer nonsense, as there are plenty of people who could at once give a key and proclaim you to be the author. Could anybody mistake Cobby, as you call him?

I have thus given you my opinion very frankly, and I hope when you consider the matter coolly you will agree with me. But if not, I cannot help it, for the Magazine is now too serious a concern to be trifled with. It has got quite above attacks and malignities, and I shall take good care never again to give them any handle for saying that they were entitled to speak of it as they once did.

The distinction between the man who profits by experience, and him who does not, could not be better shown. Hogg seems to have been sufficiently well advised not again to lose his temper, notwithstanding the plainness of speech with which he is addressed. During the years that follow his letters continue dropping in from time to time, often bearing signs of the persistent failure which accompanied all his efforts—sometimes confident as of old. There is a "Shepherd's Calendar" of which he sends number after number.[1] "I suppose it will meet the same fate as all my late attempts to serve you," says the unfortunate author; "but if it should, I shall not regard it at all. These trifles may come to be of value some time, with a little brushing up. I am sorry I have done so little to liquidate the debt, which I believe falls due next month. I will, however, come

[1] The series began in 'Maga' of April 1827.

in and talk about it in some shape." One's heart aches, and yet one can barely resist a smile at the unconscious revelation. The debt is there, a very real fact; but the poor debtor is capable of nothing but to "come in and talk about it." The dusty annals of a publisher's office, the waste heap of yellow manuscripts, letters, memoranda of the many times in which a despairing writer—to whom yet it was so easy to persuade himself that the talk would be effectual, or the next contribution redeem everything—came in to discuss his own circumstances with that arbiter of fate, are full of such memorials. And Hogg is always Hogg, whatever happens. "I have been much to blame in writing so little," he says, though, alas! in fact the little was too much; "but I am the most easily discouraged being alive—whereas *blowing me up*[1] will make me do anything."

If you but knew the confusion I have been in since I saw you [he says in another letter], you would pity me rather than be angry with me. The making up a dear rent from nothing: the confusion of two flittings (that of my parents-in-law from the distance of sixty miles to this), their distress since then, the changing of servants, wedding, washings, and sheep-shearings, cattle-shows, fairs, sales, funerals, with all the [cares] of an extensive arable and sheep farm at this season, so that the truth is, if the loss of all my friends had depended on my composing or even correcting three pages, I could not have retained them,—not that I could not have found time for such a trifle, but I could not have forced my mind into a frame for its execution.

At another time Hogg expresses himself grateful for some bantering notices of his publications in the 'Noctes':—

[1] In the sense of praising him.

James Hogg to W. Blackwood.

I am not only not angry, but highly satisfied and pleased. I had forgot to mention to you that I was afraid, terrified, for high praise in 'Maga,' because, our connection considered, it would have been taken for puffing—a thing of all things that I detest, and one that, I think, has ought but a good effect. A good-humoured thing like this was just what I wanted. . . . I think the article is Wilson's, as indeed I do every clever and every bitter thing in all the Magas of the kingdom. I have a strange indefinable sensation with regard to him, made up of a mixture of terror, admiration, and jealousy—just such a sentiment as one deil might be supposed to have for another.

At another time our Shepherd is so much himself again that he anxiously begs Mr Blackwood to give "a new round of advertisement" to one of his works (apparently 'Queen Hynde,' which "we must try and get Sir W. Scott to review in the 'Quarterly'"), prefixing "a short note from some favourable review." He adds:—

If you want a splendid characteristic one, I shall give you one from Dr Burton's new work: "Modern times can furnish no example of native and exalted genius more truly astonishing than the Ettrick Shepherd. His pages are like the constellations of Taurus and Cerberus, which seem to have usurped beyond their proportion of stars. His beauties are so thickly strewed almost on every page, it would be difficult to say where such an amazing collection of highly poetical conceptions can be found."—Burton's 'Bardiad,' p. 118.

This or any better thing you may know of would not cost much additional, and would give the works a little stimulus among a certain class ere the reading season again begins.

To this wonderful recommendation (which Mr Blackwood, alas! did not accept, acknowledging restraints of good taste which did not occur to the

Shepherd) Hogg adds a note in respect to the reception of Mr Rees, one of the Longman firm—

"Longman, Rees, & Co.,
Hurst, Orme, & Brown, our fathers in the Row,"—

who apparently was then visiting Edinburgh :—

James Hogg to W. Blackwood.

Although in the throng of my harvests, as well as of the moor sports, I will be in town again next week if possibly I can, or the next again at all events. But should I miss Mr Rees [whom he had previously desired to meet, "though merely to shake hands with him, and bring him in for a bottle of whisky made into toddy at Ambrose's"], tell him that I am going to publish two small works about Martinmas, 7s. 6d. each, 'The Shepherd's Calendar' and 'Some Passages in the Lives of Eminent Men,' and he must send the paper for both on the instant you and he agree about what share you are to have. His house and I never stand on any conditions, having an understood rule between us, which we subsequently alter or not as occasion requires.

The reader will remember that a few pages back the long-suffering Blackwood was employed, and good-humouredly consented to act, as intermediary between the Shepherd and the house of Longman, so that this free-and-easy reference to "his house and I" must have been an exceedingly good joke to the always kind and good-humoured man, open to a good joke in all circumstances, to whom it was addressed. Another very characteristic piece of reproach, not ill-natured, but very Shepherdish, follows. We have got by this time to the year 1826. The farm of Mount Benger, which never succeeded, was hanging very heavily upon Hogg, and his ventures in literature were uniformly unsuccessful :—

James Hogg to W. Blackwood.

MOUNT BENGER, *March* 19, 1826.

I would send you plenty of things to 'Maga,' provided they were either inserted or returned, which they never are. Worse encouragement cannot be than that. I was chagrined that the Forest dialogue I sent was not inserted in the 'Noctes,' not for any intrinsic merit that it had, for it had none, but that it gave a truth, a locality to Ambrose's, which, without such a native touch, that ideal meeting never can possess. I sent a complete 'Noctes' once, which of course I never saw again—"The Byron Letters," "The Cameronian in Love," and I know not how many things that might be of value to me, though not to you. You will allow that these considerations are sufficient to deter me from writing, which otherwise I would do every month, for I well know it never will be otherwise with Mr North. I would not have forgot the renewing of the promissory note, for I had a stamp ready, though only for a hundred pounds, which I meant to send this week; for, God help me! I am far from being in a condition to be able to do more. I think it is high time you were beginning some publication of mine to liquidate all or part of my debt; and I think the whole of my short Scottish Tales should be published in numbers, one every month, with the Magazine to be packed with it, and as part of the first No. sent gratis to some of your principal readers.

We should not refer to these details of debt, and his own very easy suggestions for getting rid of it, had not Hogg's affairs been very open to the world, and often before stated by himself and others; so that there is no betrayal of his private affairs in the whimsical arrangements which, now that there is no longer any sting of pain in them, are both amusing and characteristic, and will convey a thrill of sympathy and fellow-feeling to many a bosom. So many in all the generations know what it is to be thus involved, that the possibility of seeing a little fun in the matter, and all the transparent, piteous, laughable ways of getting

rid of it, is a kind of advantage in its way. Not Hogg alone has been unable to understand why "'Queen Hynde' should stick still," or any other book in the same position, or has been disposed to believe that it is only an inconceivable caprice of the publisher that makes his receipts for one work so much less than his receipts for another. "I cannot believe that she does not deserve notice, and think some expedient should be fallen on to draw notice to her," says poor Hogg; neither can he understand why Mr Blackwood should reject Dr Burton's remark on the poem because it is too flattering. "I have sought out several others, but none that pleases me so well," he adds, with delightful naïveté. We writers have the best of reasons for being tender with the amazing simplicities of those who have gone before us.

The following is one of many grumbling letters, in which a not unnatural fury against his more successful competitors breaks in :—

James Hogg to W. Blackwood.

MOUNT BENGER, *March* 28, '28.

At your desire I send you an article for the 'Agricultural Journal' and a poetical epistle for the Magazine, though I know as usual it will only be giving the carrier the trouble of bringing them out again; and as you are the only man who ever does me this honour, the oftener you do it the better, but I want to establish this fact to your own conviction that our friendship shall not fail on my part.

I am exceedingly disgusted with the last beastly 'Noctes,' and as it is manifest that the old business of mocking and ridicule is again beginning, I have been earnestly advised by several of my best and dearest friends to let you hear from me in a way to which I have a great aversion. But if I do, believe me, it shall be free of all malice, and merely to clear my character of senti-

ments and actions which I detest, and which have proved highly detrimental to me.

I care nothing about More. Tweedie has not been half so severe upon him as me. I consider him the most monotonous and the least original of all poets, bating his harmony of numbers, which is delightful. As to his great goodness of heart I dispute that: do you remember showing me a letter of his advising you to have nothing to do with a MS. publication of mine, for that I was incapable of producing any work that would go down with the public? Mr A. A. Watts has written to me thrice respecting a parcel he sent to me to the care of Mr More; but I despise the fellow so much I would not even inquire what became of it.

An author so much kept down by unfavourable criticism as the Shepherd, and so cruelly played with by all the wits, may perhaps be excused for believing that no one who considered him incapable of producing "any work that would go down with the public" was to be credited with a good heart; but this was the always kind and friendly Delta, most beloved perhaps of all the contributors, the excellent Dr Moir (generally pronounced More in these days).

Hogg's opinion of himself, however, perhaps fortunately for him, never changed. "I wish," he says on one occasion, "the writers in 'Maga' would not borrow my incidents. Desire the author of 'Sir Frizzle Pumpkin' to look at Bazil Lee in the 'Winter Evenings.'" "I fear," he says again, "it is needless for me to attempt anything further for 'Maga' without giving up the London Magazines, which I would with great pleasure do could I please you; but one does not like to lose his little lucubrations altogether." At another time he praises the "twin Magas," the double number, which on more than one occasion

Blackwood was bold enough to bring out. "They are excellent," Hogg says, "with the exception of 'La Petite Madeleine,' which to me is quite despicable. To slight your old friend for such feminine pribble-prabble! Wilson's poem is most splendid, but I have never been able to get straight through it, and I don't think any man ever will." "Scott's agents are only interested in one author in the world," he says, with fine contempt for such a mistake. "I have," says Lockhart on another occasion, "a line from Hogg saying he has made you drop him out of the Magazine: that the 'Noctes' will not be tolerable without his name, and concluding, 'The Baillie had better have given me £500 a-year'!" Such was his idea to the end of his life.

One of Mr Blackwood's numerous lesser kindnesses to the Shepherd was a gun licence, with which he supplied him every year, and which is acknowledged from time to time by a present of game from Ettrick. "Tell Miss Steuart," he writes with one of these tributes, "that the blackcock must first be parboiled, and then stewed in the *broo*, to make him a real fine dish."

Hogg's spirits seem to have been revived by the publication of several short articles after this, and the reception of several small cheques in consequence, which made the life of the farmer more cheerful. But unfortunately in the year 1833 another quarrel arose, which was violent, and might have been final but for the intervention of Hogg's faithful friend, Mr Grieve, who acted as mediator between the justly angry publisher and the hot-headed and foolish Shepherd, a man to whom no teaching of experience made

any difference, and who never learned what things could be done and said, and what could not. "By the way, why do the young Blackwoods never write to me or visit me?" he says in his answer to a letter from Mr Grieve, who had called upon him to sign a statement contradicting certain calumnious assertions he had made against the young men's father. "He is still standing out, as you see," says Mr Grieve, enclosing the letter to Mr Blackwood, "and has brought forward some new charges against you. The touch about your sons is very characteristic," adds the Shepherd's faithful friend. It is a pleasure, however, to find that this storm too blew over. In a letter to Professor Wilson, written in the year of Mr Blackwood's death, we have the Shepherd's last utterance in respect to his lifelong friend. The Professor and other friends had been much occupied in patching up the breach between Hogg and the publisher:—

James Hogg to Professor Wilson.

I will [would] be very sorry to object to any arrangement that so kind a friend has made manifestly for my benefit. It was what I wished and proposed last year, that all bygones should be bygones, and never once more mentioned. It is the far best way of settling a difference when so many alternate kindnesses have passed between the parties. For though Mr Blackwood often hurt my literary pride, I have always confessed, and will confess to my dying day, that I know no man who wished me better, or was more interested in my success. It will be a great relief of mind to Mrs Hogg, whose spirit was grieved at our break: for though terrified for the 'Noctes,' she always loved the Blackwoods as well as your family — nay, loved not only as benefactors, but as sisters and brothers.

These last words give us a curious glimpse of that

pastoral house, full of poverty, full of guests, the life of the farm fluctuating between penury and occasional profusion—sometimes porridge and sometimes grouse forming the staple of the entertainment, the whisky always flowing freely, fun and wrath, and loud recrimination and louder jest and laughter going on continually. While the goodwife watched behind, "terrified for the 'Noctes,'" not knowing what outbursts of poetical nonsense might be put into the mouth of Wilson's whimsical creation, who was a being of fancy for the rest of the world, but to her the image of her husband, caricatured, as she thought, or travestied,—yet heart-stricken by the quarrels, the failure of their grand and almost only resource of literature, and the loss of the friendship of the publisher, who had been so patient and so kind. We are glad to leave Hogg here, in the wistful reflection from his wife's eyes, and the comfort of the reconciliation which was "a great relief of mind" to the struggling house.

How this tender-hearted woman suffered from other evidences of the breach between her husband and his best friend is evident from the following letter:—

ELTRIVE LAKE, *Nov.* 3.

Mr Hogg is better, after a severe illness, though not quite stout. When he was about the worst it fell to my lot to open your letter, and you may judge how much I was astonished at the style of it, [so different] from those of yours I had seen before. I shall make no comments on the article, which I am sorry to find has bred so serious a quarrel. As to literary disputes I have nothing to do with them, yet when anything appears prejudicial to Mr H. I am not altogether callous. However, after a visit of a few days at Abbotsford, I am happy to find all animosity completely laid aside. I grieve

for all misunderstandings between old friends, and I am resolved not to be in Edinburgh without calling upon Mrs Blackwood, to whom I beg my kindest compliments.

Mrs Blackwood, we may be sure, though she did not love the poetesses, would be kindness itself to the poet's wife, who must have been still more sorely "hadden doun" by the sins of authors than she felt herself to be.

CHAPTER VIII.

WILLIAM MAGINN.

A BRILLIANT YOUTH—THE TYPICAL IRISHMAN—RALPH TUCKETT SCOTT—A FACILE CONTRIBUTOR—AN ANONYMOUS LIBELLER—THE LESLIE TRIAL—A REPENTANT SATIRIST OF KEATS—COMPLIMENTED BY CHRISTOPHER—THE PUBLISHER DECLINES TO "SWALLOW BLARNEY"—A CRITICISM OF 'DON JUAN'—O'DOHERTY'S FIRST APPEARANCE IN THE SALOON—A JOYOUS RECEPTION—DISTURBANCES IN IRELAND—"LITTLE CROFTY"—IRISH DIPLOMACY—HOW THE MARTIN LIBEL WAS DROWNED IN CHAMPAGNE—COLBURN AND HIS NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE—CRITICISM OF 'MAGA' BY A CANDID FRIEND—THEODORE HOOK—AN EXPERT'S VIEWS ON PUFFING—THE PUBLISHER'S EULOGY OF MAGINN'S STYLE—CAPTAIN SHANDON—LOCKHART'S EPITAPH.

Mr Blackwood, however, was too wise a man to build his faith solely upon two supporters, even so loyal and with such almost incredible power of production as that possessed by Lockhart and Wilson: indeed the record of these early years of the Magazine is one continued strain of effort on his part to collect around him, and to secure for his undertaking, the assistance of every man of note whom he happened to come across. It is a fact which a young writer finds it very difficult to understand, that publishers and editors, those dreaded dispensers of literary patronage, door-keepers of the temple of fame, are often just as anxiously on the outlook for new work-

men as these workmen are for their favour. But Mr Blackwood left no one in doubt on that subject. It was one of what we may call the family jests current in the saloon at Princes Street that the publisher asked everybody whom he encountered to contribute to "my Magazine." Not a man who had ever strung two lines together escaped this genial invitation; and the delightful faith which made him believe that 'Maga' could not fail to inspire every one devoted to her service was in itself inspiring,—so much so, that many a first article enthusiastically received, appears under a name that may rarely occur again, the Founder's warm conviction that whatever was sent him must be good being combined with too much strong sense to survive the contact with practical mediocrity. When William Maginn, a man who began with all the dash and brilliancy which then were supposed to be almost inalienable from the name of an Irishman, came across Blackwood's horizon, the Magazine was firmly established, and had already become a power in the political world. The new recruit came with no introduction, and not even a name. Out of the unknown, out of Cork, a place more associated with pigs and salted provisions than with literature, there suddenly stepped this joyous, reckless figure, full of power, full of spirit and fun, and a gay and careless readiness for anything which suited the tone of the Magazine and the liking of its two literary guides. He must evidently have sent some contribution which took both publisher and writers at once by storm, and gained him the warmest and most immediate of welcomes. Before he had ceased to be R. T. S., and completely unknown, he

was deep in all their secrets, and taking up their jests, their allusions, their most local pleasantries, as one to the manner born. We are by no means proud of the part Maginn took in the Magazine, nor of himself or the connection so speedily formed, and to place him immediately after the Great Twin Brethren who formed it is too honourable a place. But there was no one of the contributors who had for a number of years so much to do with 'Maga,' or who wore her colours with more apparent devotion: and his history, never written at any length or deserving to be so, is full of the tragic contrast—so often, alas! to be found in the lives of self-ruined men—of brilliant and careless youth and a maturity miserable and shameful. He was turned, indeed, into Captain Shandon, a picture in some respects too good for him, by Thackeray; and Lockhart for one had a lingering affection for him all through, and wrote him a tragico-jesting epitaph. But he has never had any justice, as who of his kind ever has? He was not a bad man: he was full of generous and friendly impulses, wit, and sometimes wisdom: but so spoilt and hampered by other qualities that every promise ended in the mean and squalid misery of a nature fallen, fallen, fallen from its high estate. Such a man cannot have justice from the world, scarcely even pity. It is almost immoral to be sorry for him, or to remember that once he was young and an emblem of all that was joyous, delightful, and gay.

Among so many flitting figures that come and go, there was no one who, for at least a few years, was so much in the foreground, mingling in everything that was going on, and frankly adopted into the closest

brotherhood of 'Maga's' original leaders, as Maginn, the rollicking O'Doherty of the Magazine, the writer of half the articles and most of the verses, the bosom friend even of so serious a man as Blackwood, who welcomed him with the utmost cordiality to his house, and confided to him all its secrets. Maginn brought much Irish wit, and an extraordinary power of adapting himself to the requirements of a world so different from his own: but he also brought what was more extraordinary still—the humours of his natural sphere along with him, and performed almost a greater feat than that by which Wilson and Lockhart managed to make the local feuds of Edinburgh familiar to the world, by doing single-handed almost the same thing for the literary quarrels and struggles of Dublin: though Ireland had no connection whatever with the Magazine, and the eccentricities of Trinity College, Dublin, could be interesting to the smallest possible class of readers. He had begun life as a schoolmaster in Cork, and was a man of considerable learning as well as much wit, ready as his countrymen have always been in felicitous speech, and full of the boundless fun and frolic with which they have been credited, whether justly or not, since light literature began. He was indeed one of the best specimens of the typical Irishman, the crystallised Paddy, ready to jest and sing, to speechify, to fight, to flatter, to make promises and to break them, with all the unstable charm of a being beyond rule, guided by his impulses, and following them to much enjoyment and renown for a time, but soon into ruin and dismay. He seems to have dropped into the Blackwood band in 1819 as accidentally as he did most other things, without, as

we have said, either introduction or guarantee, without even a name or local habitation, a mere collocation of initials, dating from a public news-room. The initials were not even his own, for it was to R. T. S. that Mr Blackwood wrote the many and long letters which we find in his letter-books. The correspondence begins on the 1st February 1820, with a letter signed C. North :—

C. North to R. T. S., Minerva Rooms, Cork.

It has for a long time been my great ambition to secure an Irish Correspondent, and though I am under great obligations to one gentleman for occasional favours, I have never as yet been able to acquire anything of the kind regularly.

The short things you have had the kindness to send afford sufficient proof that your talents and accomplishments are great and varied. Your ways of thinking, too, on all important subjects, seem to harmonise as well as possible with that, in the spirit of which the greater part of the Magazine always has been written. In short, there is no question you can, if you choose, be of more use to me, and it, than any one with whom we have casually become acquainted. If you should wish to establish any regular system of co-operation with us, you have a thousand fields on which you may enter along with the friends whose assistance we already enjoy, and one great field, the condition of your own Ireland, literary and political, &c., which you have entirely to yourself to do with as you will: and you need not fear our admitting anything that would interfere with your views in regard to Ireland, were we honoured with your aid as to that most interesting subject.

In the meantime, of all the articles you allude to, even the mathematical on Leslie, there is not one that I shall not be very proud to receive *quam primum*. I earnestly hope they may pave the way for a more close connection with a gentleman for whose talents, acquirements, and principles I entertain the highest respect.

A postscript adds that did the unknown feel dis-

posed to intrust his name to the discretion of his correspondent, there might be means found of conducting their communications post free; but that, in any case, "no matter how large the packet or what the postage may be," it would always be welcome. An amusing commentary on this is found in a note enclosed from Mr J. W. Croker a month or two later, during which time the new Irish Correspondent does not seem to have shown the desired faith in Christopher's discretion. It also throws a side-light in passing upon the curious system of franking, almost forgotten in our day, by which persons possessing any official connections were able to moderate the severity of the heavy postages of the time.

ADMIRALTY, *April* 25, 1820.

Mr Croker has received from Edinburgh a packet addressed R. T. S., Minerva Rooms, Cork. As Mr Croker does not wish to continue to frank letters of so large a size and addressed in so extraordinary a way, he requests Mr Blackwood's correspondent will communicate to Mr B. some name under which his letters may be forwarded.

Not even this appeal, however, succeeded in calling Maginn forth from his incognito. Curiously enough he had begun by calling himself Ralph Tuckett Scott, for what fantastic reason I know not; then, no doubt for some further purpose of mystification, by the initials alone. To satisfy Mr Croker, whose official position enabled him to frank the packets, a matter of so much importance in these days, he selected the name of Mr James Higginson.

The extraordinary felicity and facility with which Maginn took up the tone, and even the local colour,

of the Magazine is very curious. "You will be surprised when I tell you that the *Tête-à-tête* in this number is by a stranger to Edinburgh and every one in it except what he has picked up from the Magazine," Mr Blackwood says to one of his correspondents. It is difficult to say whether this adoption of the special interests of his new friends, or his introduction bodily, and with great applause, of the still more restricted local interests and gossip of Dublin, and even of the booksellers' shops and clubs of Cork, is more surprising. A little of the confusion of a stranger groping in the unknown to identify the figures still indistinct to him is in the following. He had taken fright lest something said in an article of his might be in any way offensive to Sir Walter Scott, and begged that it should be struck out:—

R. T. S. to W. Blackwood.

If I do not mistake, Mr North is connected somewhat more closely with the Ariosto of the North than he was at the time I wrote last. If I be right, albeit unknown, I wish him joy with all my heart. Apropos, we have a son of Sir Walter's here, a good-looking young Hessian enough. He is a poet, though not quite in the manner of his father. He publishes little pieces of poetry occasionally in our newspapers, well enough for such a vehicle. I shall send you some if you like, to regale his father.

In answering this letter, Mr Blackwood says:—

The Editor is not surprised at the mistake you have fallen into by giving his office to Mr Lockhart, who has certainly been one of our most efficient supporters. He showed your letter to Mr L., who was as much amused with it as we were.

He had heard of the verses in your Cork papers, which it seems have annoyed young Walter sadly. They are written by a corporal in the troop, whose name is William Simpson, and the initials being the same, the sin of these execrable verses is all laid to poor Walter's door.

It was not for some time after that Maginn's name was known, notwithstanding that he made himself instantly remarkable as bringing Mr Blackwood into a libel case while still he had scarcely settled into his seat as one of the staff of the Magazine,—the article on Professor Leslie, referred to in the letter nominally from Christopher North, and one of the first of any importance contributed by him, having plunged the Magazine once more into legal difficulties.

None of the previous threats of this kind had, so far as I am aware, ever been carried into court, except that of Mr J. G. Dalyell; and the culprits in these cases were at all events well-known men, old friends and powerful supporters. R. T. S. was at the very outset of his career, and known to nobody; but he too sheltered behind the steady personality of the publisher, without even a word of reproach from that much-tried man. So early an alarm might well have broken the newly formed bond, but there is nothing but the warmest cordiality in Mr Blackwood's first letter on the subject to the veiled prophet of Cork:—

W. Blackwood to R. T. S.

EDINBURGH, 22*nd March* 1820.

I look forward with pleasure to the happiness of seeing you here, and I can only say that you will meet with friends

who appreciate your talents, and will be proud to welcome you to Auld Reekie.

I was much amused to-day on meeting my old friend Leslie for the first time since your attack on him appeared. He tried to look smiling, but it was evidently a strong effort, and he asked me if we were to have another attack on him next month. I told him I rather thought not at present, but he would see the number on Saturday. I am sure he expects something, and I hope you will send us the article on the Professor's mathematical attainments.

I received the Cork paper, and saw at once to whom we were indebted for the very elegant and favourable notice of the Magazine. It has been copied into most of our Edinburgh and several of the London papers. As a small return to the Printer of the paper, I would be obliged to you to desire him to insert the enclosed advertisement twice; but not to do it until he finds that copies of this number have arrived for sale in Cork.

Before the end of the year 1820, however, the criticism, so lightly thought of, by which the Magazine had harked back, though by a new hand, to the old reckless polemics of her youth, had become a serious matter, and all the machinery of the law was set to work by the victim, with the effect, half alarming, half exciting, to which Princes Street was not altogether unaccustomed. Mr Blackwood informs his contributor of the fact in the following letter. We must remember that the man who had thus led the Magazine and its stout-hearted Publisher into renewed trouble was still, whatever guess might have been formed of his personality, no more to them than R. T. S. at the Minerva Rooms:—

W. Blackwood to R. T. S.

EDINBURGH, 6 *Dec.* 1820.

You will not be a little surprised when you open this letter to find a summons (as it is called here) which was served upon

me on Monday night at the instance of Professor Leslie. I am not much afraid of it, for my legal advisers think it a most groundless action, and that the Professor will only render himself more ridiculous. At the same time, one must be as well prepared as possible to make out strong and complete defences. For this purpose I hope you will without delay write me, largely and fully, everything that occurs to you that will prove or illustrate what is said in the different articles. You can do this better than any one, and the sooner you are able to write the better.

What most annoys me in this vile business is, the worthy Professor has, as you will observe in the summons, raised his action also against my friend Mr Lockhart. Nothing can be more absurd than this, for Mr L. is not, and never was, my Editor. He has supported the Magazine, like other friends here; but the Professor might just as well have charged any other of my contributors with being my Editor. Most fortunately, too, he has had no part whatever in any of these articles against Leslie, so that, as for him, whenever the action does come, it must instantly fall to the ground. In the meantime, however, as it may be a considerable period before the action does come on, it is most unpleasant to Mr Lockhart himself and to me, as well as to all his friends, that his name should be bandied about by these cursed Whigs in a matter in which he has no concern. Being a lawyer, too, makes the thing still more unpleasant and disagreeable. I would wish, therefore, to do anything which would at once withdraw Mr L.'s name from the process. I am sure you will feel exactly as I do, and I trust to your own honourable feelings as to the most advisable course which ought to be taken in order to show decidedly and distinctly that Mr L. is not the author of any of these articles. Another very strong reason I have for getting this at once accomplished is, that Sir Walter Scott feels very sore at seeing Mr L.'s name mentioned in this way, as he thinks it is so hurtful to a young lawyer. You can hardly conceive the distress that this thing gives me, for the whole plot and drift of the party here is to persecute and torment any one whom they suppose friendly to me; and if they could only by any means whatever disgust Sir Walter Scott, Mr Lockhart, Professor Wilson, and

others of my friends, so as to make them tired of the Magazine, then they think they would at once ruin both me and it. To accomplish this, there is no kind of trick or falsehood they will not have recourse to. Leslie, in this case, is a mere tool in their hands. . . . All they want is to annoy me or any of my friends. For myself I have no fears; but I confess it unnerves me a little to think even of the possibility of this vile crew, by these continued attacks, making it unpleasant to any one of my friends to lend me his aid. I trust in God they never will obtain such a victory, and I flatter myself that these base attacks will in the end have the contrary effect, and only rally my friends more closely around me.

I shall expect most anxiously a letter from you. Indeed, if you were nearer at hand, and the season favourable, I would offer you a visit; but at present this is out of the question. What would not I give to have the pleasure of seeing you here, for I have so much to say to you!

Dr Maginn's reply has much of the coolness of the man who, being entirely out of harm's way, and free from any possibility of even social annoyance, keeps his head, and perceives all that is excessive in the agitation of his friend who is in the middle of the fray:—

R. T. S. to W. Blackwood.

Dec. 12, 1820.

I am truly concerned that you should be engaged in so unpleasant a business as the action of Prof. Leslie against you; but I am quite sure that if your Scottish courts of law be regulated according to the principles that actuate ours in England and Ireland, you are in no danger whatever. Every point in the summons is trivial or justifiable, and in this country the man who would undertake such an action would be the butt of ridicule from one end of the Island to the other. There are some legal friends of mine who would expose the unfortunate Plaintiff worse than if they had him grinning through a pillory. I have only received your letter of the 6th this moment, so that

I have not time to point out what would seem to me the proper line of defence, as I am afraid you would be anxious to hear from me at once; but to-morrow I shall send you ample materials.

Why Mr Lockhart's name has been introduced I know not, and I am still less able to divine how such a thing can be an injury to him. His known connection with the Magazine has of course drawn on him many such suspicions, but they cannot hurt him. It will be besides very easy for him, I should imagine, to clear himself from being the author of these letters. How you do it in Scotland I cannot say, but here we should laugh at a charge of the kind unless the plaintiff possessed ample means of proving, not by *suspicion* but *fact*, that the defendant was *bonâ fide* connected with the alleged libel. That Sir Walter Scott—for whom, though I never saw him, I have the highest reverence, and whose feelings I should be as unwilling to hurt as those of my dearest friend—has felt angry on the occasion, I confess vexes me. *He*, however, must know that his son-in-law is most unwarrantably brought into the summons; and it does not take much sagacity to see that if he can get this calumny off his shoulders (as of course he triumphantly *can*), it will rather be of use than disadvantage to him. But Sir W. must be aware that not a sentence I said about Leslie was untrue. How would he think of Tom Paine if he brought an action against Watson for his Apology for the Bible?

What do you wish me to do? I do not like innuendoes: say fairly what you think would be fair, and that I shall consider of, and give you my answer openly without evasion.

As for your fear of your friends deserting you on this occasion, or of their being scared away by such attacks as these, I do not think so ill of them. If the articles were bad and malicious, or if they so thought them, they should not have continued for a moment in connection with a work so disgraced. If they think them justifiable (as they are), it would be pitiful to leave you because angry opponents thought proper to intimidate you by law, or abuse you through the press. Above all, fear not that your Magazine is in danger of sinking. If every known supporter you have were to quit you, you would suffer

the loss of men of great talents, but I trust there are within the land five hundred as good as they. There is many a man whom you know not ready to fill your places.

In fine, I believe, there can be no danger if you have a rational law of libel in Scotland. *Everything said about Leslie is true.* I am much mistaken if he does not repent this step to the day of his death. I hope you have able advisers. To-morrow you may expect a letter from me.

P.S.—As to your wishing to see me, believe me that if you were here I should be very happy to show you that I was glad to give you an Irish welcome; but I suppose that is an improbable supposition. I could not do you much service, however, in the present case.

Maginn does not seem to see that his Irish welcome was a gratification which would have done Mr Blackwood little good; but that his true name, whether, as the newspapers say, for publication or otherwise, would have given at least a certain consolation. It is curious that in the face of the danger, pecuniary and other, which Blackwood was thus involved in by his act, the active agent of the mischief remains discreetly behind his shield, too prudent to sign himself as anything more distinct than R. T. S. The most reckless even of gay Irishmen can be reticent when need is.

Mr Blackwood's next letter on this subject informs Maginn that Lockhart's name has been withdrawn from the prosecution, Leslie's agent at the same time calling upon himself "to give up the name of the author or editor," and so save himself personally from any consequences of the action. "The whole object of this letter to me," he adds, "is merely that it may be produced in process to plead from it that my

refusal to give up the name of the writer aggravates the offence. For," continues the publisher with fine force, "Leslie knows me too well to believe for one moment that I would give up the name of any writer who did not himself wish to come forward."

This delicate shaft, however, did not any more than the others pierce the defensive armour of R. T. S., who replied only by a long letter pointing out the foundation upon which his strictures on Leslie were grounded. As the trial itself has been already discussed,[1] it is unnecessary to enter into details, and we may close our account of this vexatious matter with a letter of eighteen months later, when the trial was about to take place, and when Maginn had already revealed himself in person:—

June 9, 1822 (*Sunday*).

I just this moment have received your letter of the 3rd instant. As to your complaints of my not writing for 'Maga'—believe it, it is my necessity, not my will, that hinders me; for I am pretty busily occupied from six or seven in the morning until five in the evening, so that I have little leisure, and even this little is curtailed by a thousand things in which I have intertwisted myself—in general, very foolishly. Therefore it is almost impossible for me to give you, or even to think of giving you, a long or a serious article. . . .

Do you really think I should be of the slightest use to you on the trial of Leslie *v.* B.? If so, I shall certainly be with you. I have a little business to do in Trinity College on the 1st July, which will be over about three o'clock; so that if you want me I can be in Edinburgh on the 3rd somewhere about one or two in the day—*i.e.*, God willing. But I do not think I should be a pinsworth of service to you; I am sure I could suggest no point to your lawyers of which they are not already

[1] See p. 179.

aware. However, if you are *decidedly* of opinion that my being there would be any good, write *by return of post* to say so. Why I *wish* to go to London you know, but do not let that weigh with you. It would not occasion any alteration in my arrangements, for I have not made any, and I am as ready to start for Bengal as for Bandon, and as far as my personal feelings are concerned, quite indifferent for which; so give me your opinion *candidly*, without delay.

But the new contributor not only broke new ground, as in the onslaught upon Leslie, but took up all the previous sins of the brotherhood with the heartiest relish. Their assault upon Keats, to which undue importance has been given, and their incessant reviling of the "Cockney School," were seized upon and echoed with even greater and still less refined vehemence; though, on this point at least, a certain compunction is visible when the news of the victim's death, though not "by an article," struck the satirist, still pen in hand:—

R. T. S. to W. Blackwood.

April 10, 1821.

I have just this moment heard of poor Keats's death. We are unlucky in our butts. It would appear very cruel if any jokes now appeared on the pharmacopolical part of 'Endymion.' And indeed when I heard that the poor devil was in a consumption, I was something sorry that I annoyed him at all of late. If I were able I should write a dirge over him, as a kind of *amende honorable;* but my Muse, I am afraid, does not run in the mournful.

If you print my hymn strike out the hemistich concerning him, substituting anything you like—such as "Pale is the cheek of Leigh Hunt, the tea-drinking king of the Cockneys." I hope I am in time, for it would annoy me if it appeared that we were attacking any one who had it not in his power to reply—particularly an old enemy after his death.

Mr Blackwood, as will be seen from the following letters, did all that was possible to draw his contributor from dangerous paths, and to turn his special attention to his own particular sphere, his own country, then in the throes of one of its hottest battles, that on the subject of Catholic Emancipation, which made the true state of feeling in Ireland so full of the greatest interest to every reader.

W. Blackwood to R. T. S.

EDINBURGH, 24*th July* 1820.

I still think that you and your friends could give a great deal which would interest Irishmen, while it would be entirely new to us on this side of the Channel. What can be better indeed than your last communication, "Daniel O'Rorke"? The poem itself is excellent, and you need not for a moment think that we have enough here of such articles. I hope you will urge all your friends, and do whatever you can in this poetical way. The prose is admirable. Now nothing can be better fitted for the Magazine than spirited letters of this kind, and I am sure you could throw them off by the dozen. The letters we have had of the Pringle Family have been much liked. I am confident you and your friends could do something infinitely better. I merely throw out this hint, for you are the best judge yourself, and whatever you choose to do in any way or at any time, I shall always feel deeply indebted to you for.

We have had so much on Jeffrey in the Magazine that we are afraid people would not relish so much your witty article from Davenant. It is a serious mortification to us not to insert an article of yours, but we know it would be a greater one to you, if we did not use the liberty you have so kindly given us. It is a liberty, however, that we will, I am sure, very seldom be obliged to take.

On Thursday I sent you a newspaper containing the account of my friend Mr Wilson's election to the Moral Philosophy Chair. This was a glorious triumph indeed. Never did the

Whig gang so exert themselves, for this chair has been their stronghold. There was no kind of falsehood, misrepresentation, and blackguardism which they had not recourse to. For the last two months we have been kept in continual fever and bustle. Thank God, it is now happily over. Mr Wilson has been a grand and most powerful supporter of the Magazine; but he will now have so much to do for some months to come that I cannot look for much of his assistance. My other friends, however, will not be the less mindful of 'Maga.' . . .

I wish I had it in my power to show you in any way how deeply I and my friends feel indebted to you. I have no wish you should give up your incognito unless you find it perfectly agreeable to do so; but I hope you some day will, or at all events that you will point out to me how I can make you any return for all your kindnesses. It is not merely that it would give me satisfaction were you to allow me to offer you the remuneration we make to our ordinary contributors; but the hearty goodwill with which you enter into the very spirit of 'Maga' lays me under a weight of obligation which I cannot repay you. Have you wholly given up your intention of paying us a visit? I still hope you will make a run over. . . .

W. Blackwood to R. T. S.

EDIN., 20 *Sep.* 1820.

We are sorry the critique on the Irish Peasantry did not meet your views; but the fact is, we are utterly ignorant here as to the real state of Ireland. You may rest assured that it was from no feeling towards the publishers of the pamphlet that it was so favourably spoken of; indeed this is the very thing I am always most jealous of, for I would rather see any publication of mine, or of any of my friends, cut to pieces in the Magazine than that there should be the slightest appearance of favour or partiality—for this is perfect destruction to 'Maga,' and would render her no better than a petty bookselling job. We are most anxious, therefore, that you should give full vent to your feelings on any subject of this kind: we care not though any article *you* wrote should even injure us with a portion of your population, for what we want is fair and free discussion, as we are confident this will be best in the end. Violent parti-

sans on both sides may fly off, but in the end truth and talent will prevail.

You will see that our friend Christopher has addressed Oehlenschlaeger's[1] letter to Mr David Laing. He is a young bibliopole here who was in Denmark last year with Mr James Wilson (a brother of the Professor's), and saw a number of the Copenhagen libraries. And what makes the thing more complete, there happens to be just now a Mr Feldborg whom he got very intimate with at Copenhagen: his name, therefore, is inserted, as he is a very particular friend of Oehlenschlaeger's. This, however, was not thought of till nearly 1000 copies were thrown off. However, the joke of it was equally good, as Feldborg is quite delighted with it. Christopher, you will also see, has made some alterations of names which, from local circumstances, were necessary: I hope you will approve of them. The article is one of the most effective and amusing we have ever had in the Magazine. Christopher says it is quite astonishing how you enter so completely into the very spirit and essence of 'Maga,' just as if you had all along been seated with us at Ambrose's, where the highest of our fun was concocted.

W. Blackwood to R. T. S.

EDIN., 18*th Oct.* 1820.

I know Washington Irving well, and when he was here two or three years ago, he promised to me to contribute regularly. The last time I saw him in London he repeated his promises; but he said, when he looked at our "audaciously original Magazine," he did not think he could give anything that could appear to advantage in it. These, of course, were mere phrases; but I do think he has perhaps been rather overestimated. He is a man of an amiable elegant mind, and what he does do is well conceived and finely polished, but I rather think he is not a person of great originality or strength.

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[1] This refers to the elaborate mystification already noted, the imaginary translation of a play to which the name of the Danish dramatist was appended in pure wantonness, as it seems, and the equally imaginary correspondence which followed,—all to be found in the pages of the Magazine, but unnecessary to record here.

W. Blackwood to R. T. S.

EDIN., 23 *Nov.* 1820.

I cannot say how much I owe you for your most effectual assistance. Your contributions have been so numerous and so valuable, in the truest sense of the word, that I trust you will allow me to return you some acknowledgment, for I cannot repay you for the kind and valuable aid you have given us. If you will not accept money, I trust you will allow me to send you books, and you would do me a singular favour if you would send me a list of those that would be acceptable to you. It is very awkward of me to ask you to do this; but ignorant as I am of what you possess, or what you would most prize, I would not like to send you books you did not want, and I must therefore beg of you to send me a good long list.

EDIN., 26*th Feb.* 1821.

I am not at all afraid of Tom Campbell and Master Colburn. Campbell is certainly a man of genius, and besides being a poet is an elegant prose writer. He is, however, indolent and uncertain. The two numbers that have appeared do not strike me as very wonderful: they are respectable certainly, but not overwhelming. I am much mistaken if some of our poetical critiques, and articles on the Ancient English Drama, do not show a deeper feeling of the beauties and the true spirit of poetry than even Campbell's lectures, upon which the character of 'Colburn's Magazine' so much depends. Campbell's name will do a great deal in getting clever men to write for it.

EDIN., 28*th Feb.* 1821.

From seeing the 'Examiner' to-day, I am glad we did not insert your article against Hunt in this number. It would have looked so cruel, appearing just at the time of John Hunt's trial and conviction—and to give the devil his due, he has really shown both good sense and good taste in never noticing this dispute with Scott. In his paper to-day he says: "Duel.—On Friday week a duel took place at Chalk Farm between Mr John Scott and Mr Christie, at 9 o'clock at night, by the light of the moon. The parties fired twice, Mr C. having the first time fired his pistol in the air according to one account, and not

having aimed at Mr Scott according to all. Mr Scott received a ball in the lower part of his body, which remained there for some days and kept him in a dangerous state."

Now this is one of the fairest accounts that has been published, and as the Cockney has shown so much forbearance in alluding to the Magazine, surely we owe him something in return. I understand, too, that the article in Egan's book was not written by him but by Hazlitt.

I am quite vexed at the idea of such a capital article not being used, and more particularly just now when we stand so much in need of something spirited and humorous. Perhaps, however, you will be able to alter or adapt it in some other way that it would answer better.

I need not say how very anxious I am that you may have leisure to send me something or other for next month. It is a most critical period of the magazine just now, and I am leaving no stone unturned in order to have our next and some following numbers strong and powerful.

The confidential terms upon which the publisher had by this time got with his still unknown contributor is proved by the very amusing letter I here quote :—

W. Blackwood to Ralph Tuckett Scott.

EDIN., 19*th June* 1821.

As to your blarney of my being able to do this (i.e., *write article for 'Maga' on John Bull's letter to Lord Byron*) myself, it is really too much for me to swallow. I am vain enough of having suggested from time to time to my friends subject-matter for prime articles, but truly as to anything else I have no pretensions to it. Your idea as to how the thing should be done is admirable, and I wish to God you had time to fill up your sketch. I do most cordially agree with you that *I* deserve quizzing for refusing to sell 'Don Juan,' and should not be spared in the article. The only apology I have to offer to *you* is this, that it proceeded partly from pique and partly from principle. When the book was published by Murray, I was just on the point of breaking with him. I had not had a letter

from him for some months. He sent me copies of the book per mail, without either letter or invoice, so that when I received them I was not disposed to read it with a favourable eye. I did read it, and I declare solemnly to you, much as I admired the talent and genius displayed in it, I never in my life was so filled with utter disgust. It was not the grossness or blackguardism which struck me, but it was the vile, heartless, and cold-blooded way in which this fiend attempted to degrade every tender and sacred feeling of the human heart. I felt such a revolting at the whole book after I had finished it, that I was glad of the excuse I had, from Mr Murray not writing me, for refusing to sell it. I was terribly laughed at by my friends here, and I daresay you will laugh as much still at my prudery and pique.

The following letters show that Mr Blackwood's advice as to Irish articles was occasionally taken; and as the details, by dint of being so old, will be new to many readers, we quote them, at the risk even of giving too much of Maginn:—

R. T. S. to W. Blackwood.

May 9, 1821.

You may have seen in the last literary Gazette an advertisement extracted from a Cork paper, announcing a course of lectures from Carter, the pugilist, who, with Sutton and Reynolds, is campaigning in Cork. It does not require much tact to perceive that the whole affair is a quiz, got up for the annoyance of our Scientific Society, which usually supplies us with butts. The gentleman who last year supplied you with Dowden's speech for the Luctus is writing an opening lecture on Antemundane pugilism, which I believe eventually goes to you. But by publishing a letter of mine in which I mentioned a paper of his on Dowden's madness, which by the way he actually wrote, you have sadly frightened him, for he is one of the thin-skinned generation.

I do not like to write anti-Catholic articles for you; but you are wrong in taking the other side: it obliges none of your friends, and disobliges us. The question, in fact, ought to be

avoided altogether; for divided as ministerial men are on the subject, when they begin to dispute they only abuse one another for the diversion of the common enemy. For instance, was not Canning's attack in the House on Ellis of Dublin—one of the staunchest Government men in the kingdom—very ill judged, and just exactly what the opposition faction in Ireland desired? And to descend to ourselves, why need the Reviewer of 'Lafontaine' (Croker) step out of his way to revile a system of laws upheld by some of the most loyal men in the empire? or why should I waste my time in answering or exposing the ignorance of that Reviewer, when I agree with him in the leading features of policy, while we both have enemies enough, who hate not merely the system of penal laws, but every system calculated to give strength to Church and State? This in brief is my principal objection to your introducing the question at all. Of this be sure: the Protestants of Ireland are, with the trifling exceptions of those swayed by faction or interest, decidedly hostile to any further concession to the Papists. In Cork, for example, the Protestant population of which is about 17 or 18,000, a Protestant petition in favour of emancipation was got up; and it received exactly 89 signatures. If you were in Ireland you would not wonder at our hostility. I never knew a traveller from the sister island, even were he bitten by the 'Edinburgh Review,'—a work with which I should be sorry to see you in any point whatever co-operating,—who did not leave Ireland with the same feeling. However, Protestants and R. Catholics live here together in the greatest jollity—some of my most intimate acquaintances being of the latter religion. An impartial spectator would laugh at the unanimity of disapprobation with which all parties received the measures proposed by Mr Plunkett, and the staunch co-operation of the most violent leaders on both sides, in devising methods of resistance.

Feb. 25, 1822.

We have had a special commission here, at which no less than 32 were sentenced to be hanged: these exhibit to-day at Churchtower—a place where they burnt four policemen. Our county magistrates at a meeting of more than 100 voted the Insurrection out for the entire county, which is a strong measure when

you consider that this county contains more than a third of the population of all Scotland. It will certainly put down this silly Jacquerie. Plunkett has been here, but did not display his usual eloquence, and seemed rather out of place as Attorney-General. The Marquis of Wellesley is puffed—and detested—by all parties, and I understand is not a little tired already of his place. . . .

As for me, you may tell *any* CORK man *any*thing you like, true or untrue, about me; for I am known by everybody gentle and simple in the city, and they are ready to believe anything good or bad about my affairs. So if you think fit, write to Croker informing him that his guess was right. But to people un-Corcagian I have no desire to be notorious at all.

It was in the summer of 1821, and no doubt in answer to Blackwood's desire that he should present himself in person, that Maginn appeared in Edinburgh, casting aside all the fictions of anonymity. Mrs Gordon, in her life of Professor Wilson, quotes from the 'Dublin University Magazine' an account said to have been written by D. M. Moir of the characteristic manner in which Maginn first appeared in Princes Street, which he did in the character of an angry Irishman, offended by strictures in the Magazine, and demanding the name of the writer. Blackwood, alas! not unaccustomed to such a demand, replied in his usual way, and finally declined to give any information on the subject. "If you don't know him, then," cried the visitor, "perhaps you know your own handwriting," at the same time producing a packet of letters. "You need not deny your correspondence with that gentleman: I am that gentleman." It was very like Maginn to make his entrance upon the scene in this way; and he was received with acclamation into the very

bosom of the lively society which formed the body-guard of 'Maga,' and of which he had become already, though in the mists of distance and anonymity, so complete a member, entering into all their jests, and adding both fun and thunder of his own without scruple or hindrance. Probably so complete a union never was formed without any personal knowledge. He outdid them all, which was saying a great deal, in the recklessness of his jesting and of the facile pen which ran away with him. He had, I presume, the charm of Irish frankness, or apparent frankness, the *abandon* of manner which is not always the *abandon* of the heart; and he was received with open arms, and without, it would seem, the most momentary hesitation. He who had entered into the very atmosphere of this unknown place, the dashing Irishman, taking up the very tone of these gay and reckless Scots with a curious confusion of traditionary national sentiment, became more and more one with them after personal acquaintance,—a union which was quite unchecked by the fact that Blackwood had presently £100 of damages to pay for one of the first freaks of the new contributor. With all the differences of age and temperament, and such a practical hindrance as this, it is very interesting to see how the Publisher, who had so much trouble already in holding in these wild wits, took this new and wildest wit of all into his heart, and, until the serious stress of years and the deteriorating influences of an irregular literary life had broken down all the trust which the most romantic friendship could have in him, was faithful to the gay and witty Irishman, to whom he wrote

long letters for several years, and whose correspondence in return—"your lively and friendly letters"—he looked for with so much pleasant anticipation.

Were it not that Maginn had already formed the resolution to throw himself into literary life in London, we might imagine that this visit determined him to do so, for never was reception of a new combatant more hearty and joyous. The household in Salisbury Road was overflowing with children, some of whom had already reached the most appreciative age of youth, and the charm of his Irish gaiety and freedom seems to have taken instant possession of the family. His letters afterwards are always rounded by a message to the young people,—"compliments to Mrs Blackwood, and love to all the other fellows—male and female," he says. In one of these early letters, written some months after leaving Edinburgh, is the following note, which, remembering the gentle and genial personage alluded to, the kind "Major"[1] of later days, most benign of all the brethren, we copy with pleasure:—

W. Maginn to W. Blackwood.

January, '22.

Will you let me put in a word connected with my profession? Educate our namesake Will—he is the making of a clever fellow. I don't mean to disparage your elder sons, but I suppose you have disposed of them already. But let Will show his face in a University.

The advice was given too late, for the second William Blackwood was already devoted to the service of his country in another way. A kind friend (it was

[1] Major William Blackwood, third son of the publisher, who came into the business in 1849, after many years' service in the Indian army.

the formula of these kinder days) had noted on a visit "your fine family of boys," and inquired, which was also a kind formula, what the father meant to do with them, with friendly impulses of help going through the mind. In this case it was, I think, Mrs Hughes, the wife of a Canon of St Paul's, a frequent visitor to Scotland, a friend of Sir Walter, and finally, as the height of perfection, the grandmother, I believe, of our beloved Tom Brown[1] of Rugby and Oxford, Judge Hughes of the present day—who asked the question; and probably on hearing that the boy's inclinations pointed towards the army, this lady, on her return to London, exerted herself to get a cadetship for the young Willie. In another chapter we shall see with what anxious love his father watched over the early career of this boy. *His* University was the old strange world of India, the long monotony of the career so unlike that of the present day, when a young man thinks nothing of skipping over land and sea for a holiday of six weeks with his people. Young William did not return for more than twenty years, and never saw his father again.

The following letter was written after Maginn's return to Cork, and gives a glimpse of the more serious studies by which he meant to secure a blaze of reputation for his formal entry upon the world. His scholarship of the more usual kind was already the admiration of his Scottish friends:—

Dr Maginn to W. Blackwood.

Nov. 12, 1821.

The accounts of the disturbances in the South of Ireland are in general much exaggerated, and the comments of the English

[1] Still living at the time these words were written.

editors are dictated by a profound ignorance of our affairs. This county, with the exception of a small district about 30 miles north from the city, which, from its proximity to Limerick, has been a little disturbed, is perfectly quiet. Limerick is the main scene of action. The number of rioters does not appear to be very great; but they, by intimidation, compel the peaceably inclined peasantry very often to swell their ranks. Arms are demanded and nothing else; and they are under such good discipline that plate, money, &c., are quite safe, and, what is more extraordinary when you consider the habits of our lower orders, liquor of all kinds is scrupulously abstained from, even if offered. I know several persons who have come in contact with them and their leader, Captain Rock, a name as authentic as that of another leader, Mr North. He is a polite, well-dressed, and gentleman-like fellow, strange as it may appear to you. In general, there are no personal injuries inflicted. Will Purcell of Albamira beat off a party of them from before his house last week, with the assistance only of a single man; and this has raised the valour of our gentry. If they imitate the example, as I am pretty sure they will, the thing will be over in a month. We blame Mr Grant for the whole. He has been bitten with the silly mania of affecting liberality, conciliation, and other Lillabulleros of that kind; which, of course, is regarded as cowardice or want of power. Peel, *our* favourite, kept Ireland quiet from North to South by a contrary conduct. When I get 'John Bull,' I shall write you an article on the subject, not blaming Grant of course; but venting all manner of indignation on the "vile instruments of faction" and "the base Whigs." . . .

I must again ask you to find out for me what are the latest and best Syriac, Chaldee, and Samaritan grammars. Now, write to Cadell and Davies to learn; if they themselves cannot tell, they will easily learn from Valpy. It would do me incalculable service if I could compile a work on the subject, for Dr Kyle would put it into the course of Trinity College; and, it is highly probable, it would be puffed by some excellent article in that department. Besides, it would give me a grand air with the public to make my appearance ringed round with the venerable forms of the outlandish alphabets of the East.

Maginn did not leave Cork till 1823, and in the meantime he continued occasionally his expositions of Irish affairs, as well as a running thread of suggestions, criticisms, and advices, not always approved, for the conduct of the Magazine. This lively commentator, however, was in no way discouraged by any rebuff, but flowed on as cheerfully as ever, discouraged by nothing, not even by the occasional refusal of his articles. "You much mistake if you think I care about the non-insertion of any article of mine: such things trouble me but little," he says, and to all appearance he refused steadily all payment for his contributions, except in the form of Syriac grammars, &c., for two or three years after his connection with 'Maga' began—as long, indeed, as he remained in Ireland, and had not committed himself to the precarious life of the press. Many evidences of the hasty and headlong spirit, and the mind which it is to be feared considered a literary lie as a good joke, will be seen through all these. He had written, for instance, a sarcastic article about Southey's 'Vision of Judgment,' that most universally abused of all compositions; but for various reasons changed his mind, and bids his friend destroy it. "I must say I agree with 'John Bull' in thinking that the spirit of the 'Quarterly' is barbarous, and that I think some strong decisive straight-ahead puff should be given to Southey. The 'Vision of Judgment,' which everybody abuses, would be a fit thing enough to panegyrise." "I have promised an article to little Crofty Croker about his book," he says again, "but have neglected doing it. Write to me to say that you have a great press of matter which prevented my

article, for the little man is a very great friend of yours. It is he who franks my packets," says the ungrateful and graceless critic. And he is continually suggesting renewed attacks upon "Little Jeff," upon Hazlitt, and others. Of Hazlitt he says, "You have called him pimpled, affected, ignorant, a Cockney scribbler, &c., but what is that to what he has said of the most brilliant men of the age? Hook-nosed Wellington, vulture-beaked Southey, hanging-browed Croker, down-looking Jack Murray, and Mudford fat as fleecy-hosiery." Certainly there was no grace of elocution lost among these wranglers. The following about the state of Ireland is interesting, and throws a light unsuspected on Protestant grievances:—

Dr Maginn to W. Blackwood.

CORK, *4th Feb.* 1823.

As for us, we are on the verge of a civil war. Cork has always been distinguished for moderation, but Dublin is in a flame. If the Marquis be continued to misgovern us, I do not see how things can be at all accommodated. You would be perfectly amazed at the rabid fury of both parties,—for, accustomed as I have always been to outrageous contests, I confess I am a trifle flabbergasted. *N'importe.* If there be a civil war I can lose nothing but my head, which is of use to no one but the owner—and may pick up something in the scramble. Old habits of authority have made it a fixed persuasion in Ireland among the Protestants that one Protestant could beat five Papists, and of course I have no fear for the result. Really, without jest, we are woefully insulted. I don't mean as to that buffoonery about the Italians, which you know I disapproved: but our clergy are reviled and personally abused; our very private parties spied; our toasts controlled by authority; our churches polluted; the priests domineering, swaggering, and libelling our faith, our conduct, and our principles; and, worst of all, if we dare to say a word in reply

to the most atrocious calumnies or downright insults, we are denounced as not conciliatory. If you had a drop of the old wranglesome Antiburgher blood in your veins, it would boil if you were treated as we are. Look at a playhouse riot construed into high treason; or a conspiracy of the Protestants (a body of men as numerous as the population of Jutland) to murder, with a *huge* quart bottle, as a Cork newspaper called it, the representative of our most gracious king. Plunkett is hunting down those dreadfully oppressed men, whom he has attacked with the venom of a bloodhound, but he has missed his quarry. I hope his turn will come some time or other; if we fight, many a bullet is at his service. In a word, the question is now narrowed to this—Is the Protestant religion to be tolerated in Ireland? And the end will be that England will have to conquer the country again, which consummation I hope most devoutly to witness. But what is this long mess of Irish politics to you? Not a pinsworth; but all men's minds here are so full of the posture of affairs that we can scarce dream of anything else.

And here is a piece of sage advice which must have come well from a comparatively new man. It refers to a supposed quarrel with Galt, in which Maginn opines with complimentary censure that Blackwood must be in the wrong—"for you are a man of sense and he a blockhead, with whom a man of sense should never quarrel."

It is probable that in a tradesman point of view you will lose little by not publishing 'Ringan Gilhaize,' for G. is writing too fast. Even Waverley himself is going it too strong on us, and he is a *leetle* better trump than Galt. However, do not let anything ever so little harsh appear against it in 'Maga.' I shall review it for you, if you like, praising it and extracting the greatest trash to be found in it as specimens to bear out my panegyric. G. will swallow it. In one thing you were decidedly wrong; you ought not to have allowed him to get so thorough an insight into the method of managing the Magazine. Henceforward admit no other partner into the concern. With W.

there is no chance of differing,—and L. is capricious perhaps, but after all sure. As for me, there being no probability of my turning author of anything beyond a spelling-book, you may be sure of my continuing a fashioner of articles such as they are. Keep your other hands in subordination. Authors will always have bickerings and jealousies of their own, which renders them dangerous *managers* of such an affair as 'Maga.' . . . Cadell's affair is rather more serious. If he be bullied by that vagabond Hazlitt, would it be impossible for you to heal the old wounds between you and Murray? Believe me, it would be worth trying, and Croker is a fine channel. What I principally write to you about is this. As you cannot go soon enough to London yourself to superintend the details of this affair, would it be possible for you to get Cadell to hold over his determination of giving up 'Maga' till the end of next month. If so, I offer myself as your plenipotentiary, for, God willing, I shall be in London about the 27th of June. I think I should be able to show the true state of the case to Cadell, and to palaver him out of sticking to Hazlitt. There are few who know so exactly the history, &c., of 'Maga' as I do, or who are so thoroughly [instructed] on the subject of Whig libels. If you think this a good plan, write to C. that circumstances, &c., prevent you or any of your intimate friends from immediately having a personal interview with him, which could alone satisfactorily explain affairs; but that if he suspends his judgment for five or six weeks, one will call on him who is up to all the business, and is moreover a most worthy Christian: give him my name, of course. I flatter myself I should carry you through swimmingly, striking dumb the bibliopole of London town. The devil is in the dice if I should not mystify him famously as to who the author of the libels, &c., of 'Maga' are, for I'd tell him, after swearing him not to disclose a word of it, that Galt was the man principally engaged, then Hogg—that W. & L. were the most innocent people in the world. Write me word what you think of this idea. I had rather that you would not say anything at all about it to *anybody*, even to L. I anticipate some sport in London, particularly as I would not give the end of a fig for all its sights and humdrum diversions. I'll take famous care that you shall be puffed during my stay in all quarters, for

I have got considerable influence in that valuable corps, the gentlemen of the press—some of whom I have obliged, and others libelled. Either gives a man a sort of claim to civility. You may tell L., as he is anxious on this head, that a provincial paper here—the 'Advertiser'—for which I write a great deal, is to come before God and its country for telling the truth of a priest. There is an immense tumult expected, which I am happy to think of. I, however, am not the writer of the alleged libel. The business has created a sensation throughout all Ireland.

The idea of Maginn's interference, either to heal the wounds of John Murray or to smooth down Cadell, does not appear to have been taken advantage of; but there were occasions when his help was called for, and most readily given—especially during the terrible crisis in the life of Wilson which has been already related, the threatened action of Martin, when our Professor showed but the heart of a mouse in his big bosom. It will give the reader a kind thought of the wild and disorderly Irishman if we here quote the two letters which bear upon that unpleasant story. They are more like him, we think, than the picture of Captain Shandon, who was too refined and gentlemanlike in his debtor's prison, and at the same time too cynical, for our unfortunate man of letters. This little apologue shows how he met another Irishman like himself, wild for bloodshed and damages and a trial for libel, and with native instinct, the profound knowledge of a fellow-countryman, plucked the sting out of him, and smoothed him down—or at least for the moment was supposed to have done so. The account of the transaction is written to Mr Blackwood, who was, as usual, the person left to bear the brunt, as he had done for Maginn himself

in the Leslie trial, and generally for his friends in turn. Maginn begins by a regret that he is the only Irishman on the spot to tackle his angry compatriot :—

W. Maginn to W. Blackwood.

LONDON, 20 *Sept.* 1825.

It is unlucky that this should have happened just now, when all the Irish are out of town, else I should have found some Galway acquaintance of Martin's. For myself, I don't care to have it *insinuated* as broadly as possible that I am the author, and shall certainly try to get the thing off Wilson: but his style is too marked to have it much believed. Dunlop, for instance, knew it at once, and that's very like a publication. If you give me *carte blanche* to act as I think fit, I may pull you through. If I can get introduced to Martin, we Irish know how to talk to each other, and we might settle it amicably. Let me say that the thing was a warm joke, no doubt; that it was, however, only suited for the warmer persons who uttered it, and that an apology both serious and jocular shall be given in the Magazine; that you are personally very sorry for it,—and I think that may do.

I shall promise that his Society (his greatest failing) shall be praised to the stars in the Magazine. If you can rely on W.'s discretion, I should recommend him to come up to London. M. is a gentleman who could be most safely trusted with a secret given to him by a gentleman, and I daresay could be made to laugh at the whole story. If W., however, is not to be trusted, I shall take it all on my own shoulders.

It will be remembered that Wilson was not at all to be trusted—so little that he had declared with anguish that if he was made to go to London it would be to throw himself into the Thames. He was indeed quite hysterical, and had altogether lost his self-control, so that on Maginn's shoulders the burden had to rest. The manner in which he acted

for his friend is exceedingly amusing. A week later we find the following letter:—

27 *Sept.* 1825.

I have, I believe, settled your business for you. The best way in all these cases is to take the bull by the horns, and accordingly, although I had no acquaintance with Col. Martin, yet I called on him in his lodgings on Friday. He was not at home. He lives at 16 Manchester Buildings. So I went across to the Admiralty and wrote a hasty note, which I sent to him. I said I was commissioned by you to call on him to offer additional explanations to your letter of the 20th inst., and as I had not the good luck of meeting him, I concluded by asking him to dine with me next day. This, of course, I did in a jocular manner, apologising in a laughing way for the liberty. I appointed the Somerset as the place of meeting, and accordingly at six yesterday I found him there waiting for me. I introduced myself at once, and immediately went to business.

I was under some embarrassment at first, in consequence of his not having got your letter or Magazine; but by mere chance I had your letter to me in my pocket, and I read him the copy you sent me. He was very angry at first, but I outtalked him. I shall make you laugh, I think, when I see you, at our conversation; but it would be no good to detail it. He was anxious that I should tell him the name of the writer; and I wish W. would let me. It would be quite safe in every respect with the Colonel; for queer as his manner undoubtedly is, he is in every way a gentleman. This, of course, is for the Prof. to consider. He will hear it from some channel; and it would be handsome, I think, if he had it from us.

He is savage against the 'Chronicle,' and particularly so against Adolphus. There will be no action against you if he can do without it, and I got him to agree with me that it was not requisite to his cause against Clement to prosecute you. As dinner progressed he got into greater good-humour with me, and said that on my account he would be quite lenient with you. On going away he said, as his final determination, that he would wait till the next Magazine, and if what was said there was as described in the copy of your letter (which I gave

him), there was an end of his proceedings against you. He said he understood you were a d——d decent man, but that you ought to take care of what you got your people to write (true enough, *entre nous*). I excused you, *inter alia*, by saying that your corporation affairs occupied your attention sadly—Duke of Brunswick, Marquis of Hastings, &c. "Well," said he, "like enough. The Scotch never lose an opportunity of rubbing themselves to quality; but, by God! he could not take a worse way of obliging Hastings than by abusing me." I hope the article in the forthcoming Mag. will please him. At all events, I have made him promise that he will not annoy Cadell at all.

I am to see Martin again in the course of the week. I have promised to introduce Crowe to him, which will be amusing. I shall write to Wilson to ask his leave to mention his name *sub rosa*, and I hope he will grant it.

I think I did a good job for you. As I cannot offer to give people champagne at my own expense, I charge you the bill, which, like Falstaff's, is rather heavier in the drinking than in the eating. It amounts in all to £3, 7s., with which I debit you.

The matter did not end there unfortunately, and we fear that the publisher's pocket was once more mulcted, though privately. But Maginn's good offices are worth recording. His outset on life in London had various amusing incidents connected with it, some of which we may add here. Colburn was the first publisher, or among the first, who systematically gave himself to the production of fashionable novels and the lightest of light literature. He had not long before set up the 'New Monthly Magazine' under the editorship of Campbell the poet, was supposed to be the inventor of an extraordinary new system of puffery, and was the butt of all the wits. His reign lasted a long time as a publisher of novels. He was, as we have all understood, one of the celebrated

firm of Bacon & Bungay in 'Pendennis.' Maginn's first meeting with this potentate is described as follows:—

Dr Maginn to W. Blackwood.

June 25, '23.

I saw Colburn. He attended on me at his shop—spoke of the weather—the news—the newspapers—the periodicals—the 'New Monthly'—'Blackwood's Mag.'—Blackwood himself (very kindly)—his being in town—at the Somerset: was not I at the Somerset? I knew Blackwood?—his contributors? his Irish contributors?—and in the end, after about an hour's conversation, he took me into his sanctum under pretence of showing me some old books, and making me a low bow, said he was happy to see Mr O'Doherty in person. I laughed at him—said it was fudge—that he was bammed by somebody, &c. But he stuck to it. Complained of *my* ill treatment of him, particularly in accusing him of employing old Dictionary Watkins to draw up a life of Lord Byron—that he did no such thing, but bought the book honestly, without knowing anything about it. By Jupiter! this is odd, for it *was* I who wrote the article, out of Alaric's notes. I of course denied everything plump. Never wrote anything for anybody. Would be sorry to abuse so respectable a person as Mr C., or so valuable a book as the 'New M.' But I was talking to an incredulous auditor. He asked me to dine with him for to-morrow, which I declined: he shook hands at parting, quite cordial, and he whispered to me as I went away, "Thirty guineas a sheet." I laughed at him, and drove off. I have not time to give you the particulars more minutely, but I will draw up a minute of everything he said, for I have picked up some strange information about Hazlitt, Patmore, B. Cornwall, C. Redding, &c. Observe, however, that not a word goes into print, for that would be treachery with a vengeance.

We add various criticisms, &c., from the same unscrupulous but generally entertaining hand:—

The faults of 'Maga'—I am entitled to speak of them for various reasons—are, first, too much locality of allusion: I

know a *quantum suff.* of such things is of great use in spreading a sale, but there is a limit. Secondly, occasional coarseness, which annoys the Englishman. Thirdly, the attempts of minor correspondents to imitate the audacious puffery of the Magazine, which can be done by W. only. To correct the three faults, let every number henceforward be written exclusively for London, forgetting that there is such a city in the world as Edinburgh. The 'Noctes' will be sufficient for locality.

With respect to Gifford, I never have seen him; but I know that his conversation, particularly since his health began to decline, is excessively splenetic. He is a fanatical Ministerialist, and retains even now his old hatred of the Jacobins, Della Cruscans, &c. His information on all points is prodigious, and he pours it forth very freely. I am told he dislikes all his associates—Croker, J. Murray, &c.—but I do not know how true that is. He would be a hard card to manage in a dialogue.

I of course heard an immensity of your Mag.; in London you are blamed for attacking obscure Londoners, most particularly Hazlitt. He is really too insignificant an animal. Make it a rule that his name be never mentioned by any of your friends; I for one will keep it. Croly is quite shocked at Tickler's attack on the gentlemen of the press, little suspecting that he was giving me a rap over the knuckles. He evidently has a vast veneration for the power of that company, and takes great credit to himself for suppressing the squib of B.'s blackguards. God help us! I dined with him in company with an insufferable wretch of the name of ——, who knows everything of 'Maga' that Croly knows, and who boasts of enjoying the confidence of L. I hope this is impossible, for the creature conducts some unheard-of paper in London, and is one of the press gang. He told me many other things, that he knew L. to be Z., for he had it from his own lips. Surely L. could not be such a spoony. I denied it flatly, saying that I had good reason to know that the gentleman who wrote Z. is now in Germany. He knew something about me, picked up among the pressmen, particularly my rumpus with Conway. The man is a cursed bore. I put your friends on their guard against him. He speaks of Scott as if they had been pickpockets together at Calder Fair.

I gave your correspondent Titus a puff in the last 'Bull,' because the man deserves encouragement. Puffing any of *ourselves* would be praise thrown away. Murray sent me word that he *wished* me to review any friend of mine in *any* way I liked in the 'Quarterly'; and as he understood I was a man of classical, &c., knowledge, would feel *much obliged* if I took up that line regularly for the 'Quarterly.' This I believe I shall do, as my name is rather bad in London, and wants to be bolstered up with larning.

I have received two letters from Croker this week. In a *tête-à-tête* conversation which we had, I spoke quite freely of what he wrote or was supposed to have written, and he answered me as freely. I told him that I had purchased for L. thirty odd shillings' worth of little books attributed to him a couple of years ago, and told him their names, as well as I could remember them. This appeared to annoy him considerably, and he pointedly denied the imputation. I got a note next day, directly asserting that he had in Ireland written only the familiar epistles, 'The Sketch of Ireland, Past and Present,' and the 'Intercepted Letter,' and nothing else. He begged me to communicate this to L. I told him in reply that I should of course do so, but feared the incredulity of the world was such that *my* denying anything to *L.* would just confirm it. I said at the same time that Mahon, of Dublin, had informed me that he and Sir W. Smyth (a Baron of the Irish Exchequer, a man of splendid abilities) had conducted a periodical called the 'Anonymous' together. This produced another note, part of which I shall copy for your edification in the last page of this letter. His opinion of 'Maga' is high; but he is absurdly sore about the abuse of the 'Quarterly' and of Murray. "If *you* knew him," said he, "you would not speak of him as you do." I assured him *I* had nothing to do with abusing Murray, but spoke openly about what I thought was the pitiful conduct of this 'Quarterly' towards 'Maga.' He made no reply whatever. I asked him why L.'s ballads had not been reviewed, according to promise to Sir W. S. He said that he never heard of any such promise, but would speak to Murray about it. In fact, he added, he did not know anybody who was *au fait* enough at Spanish literature to give a suitable review. That,

I told him, could be easily remedied, for I would venture to do one myself. To this I got no answer. Now, I have not the knowledge to do a fit review, but do you get me a learned one, discursive on Spanish literature, antiquities, &c., and I shall send it in my own handwriting right ahead to C. with a proper letter. The devil is in the dice if he can get out of that. Would L. have any objection to do it himself? I assure him on honour I should do it if I had the knowledge, but I have not—I mean knowledge enough to make a good appearance in the 'Quarterly.' If he does it, let him show *savoir faire* enough to completely overlook the strictures on him in the 'London Magazine' by Bowring—it would be spoony to pretend to have seen them. C. was quite amused by Lord Fife's patronage of Mag.: he said it was quite right—if he was a Thane he would do the same. The Mag. was "*un peu polisson*" (these were his words), but really an original feature in our literature. His opinion of Edinburgh society is very low—comically so, I assure you. Hook—will do nothing for you. Why he puffs Jackass Smyth is more than I can tell, but S. is a good deal about town. I wish you could get a Balaamitical song from him, for he sings everywhere his own excrement. Do you know that H. is publishing a book with Colburn—a book of tales? I take it to be a great secret, for C. denied it to me, and H. blushed up to the ears when I mentioned it. If it be a secret, do not you say anything about it as coming from me. I dined on Tuesday with H., and had an immensity of talk; but, unfortunately, we did not dine until eight o'clock, and at ten a Mr Goodsir, a great friend of H.'s, sloped in. As for 'Bull,'[1] I have *carte blanche* to do as I like. But puffs in the inner page must not exceed a quarter, or at most half, a column. Croker does *not* write for 'Bull,' depend on that. Hook, he, and a clergyman of the name of Cannon, a prime contributor, who has written many songs, wrote the song of "Hunting the Hare" a couple of years ago, but nothing else came from him. Canning, they *believe*, wrote a famous article about Lambton's reform motion. Blair wrote the Anticatholic articles, and Sir A. Boswell some Scotch affairs. Cadell did not ask me to his house, but was

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[1] The 'John Bull' newspaper.

very civil; so were the Underwoods and Richardson, who wanted me to go down to Dover with him. Colburn has no information whatever about your Magazine—is evidently quite vexed with Campbell's timidity: after all, it may be, he says, for the best, for it keeps him out of scrapes—the 'N. M.' is at the top of the tree now, &c., &c. Hazlitt, he says, is a fool, John Hunt a rogue, L. Hunt a puppy, Patmore a *bad young man* (his very words). He hates Croker—and Croker hates him. Lady Morgan's book that is forthcoming is a Salvator Rosa: he thinks it will be a good one. "'Italy,'" says he, "without humbug, sold well."

Now have the honesty to burn this letter after reading it, for it contains what never was written before, and there is no knowing what accident may do. It would be a pretty *bonne bouche* for Cockaigne. So commit *quam primum* to the flames.

July 30.

The rush and helter-skelter of this beginning did not argue well for future life. Maginn plunged into London, as he might have done into the great ocean, with the careless impulse of a sea-side bather, thinking that light inspiration enough. He was ready to engage in any and every kind of work—to negotiate between the publishers, to puff the books, to take the reproach of every unruly movement upon himself if necessary. "If you want to mystify Cadell about the Hunts, I don't care a rap if you do it at my expense," he says. "W. would most likely not be willing to come forward with any of the tribe; but I do not value the vagabond the tenth part of a cabbage stump, and would just as soon get into a row regular with them as empty a can of punch. So if you wish for a bullying match, I shall support the honour of my country in that important department." "As for puffing," he adds, "I shall stir the army of the Press. Irish puffing is

not worth a rap." Both in this point, and in the reverse fault of abuse, to which Maginn was more addicted, Blackwood did what he could to restrain the too reckless wit, as the following letter will show :—

W. Blackwood to Dr Maginn.

23 *Feb.* 1825.

You are disappointed and displeased that your puff direct of 'Sayings and Doings' was not inserted. Had it been received in time it could have been cut down and made some use of along with the other articles; but you should know by this time that such a professed panegyric, coupled with a personal defence of the author, could do no good to the book itself, and would most certainly do no good to my Magazine. In writing these things, however desirable it is to puff a friend, this is not the effectual way to do it, and you should also think a little how far it would be of use to the Magazine. The article on the former series was not what it ought to have been in either respect, but had it not been cut down, corrected, and improved, it would have been as miserable a concern as the critique which appeared in the 'New Monthly.' I need not tell you how sensible I am of what you have done for my Magazine, and you can do for it; but what I would beg of you is to consider what will be of use to it,—things that may be very good jokes among ourselves, may often be very much the reverse when given to the public. Indeed the Magazine can only be injured by itself, not by its enemies, whose attacks serve merely to excite curiosity. Above all, when you write to me I would entreat of you to do it not in the *poco curante* way, but as you know I would do it to you, seriously and kindly. With regard to Lord John Russell's book, I hope you will do it as it should be done. Though a Whig and a prig he is an English gentleman, and should be treated accordingly.

W. Blackwood to Dr Maginn.

London, *Aug.* 22, 1825.

Even if I had read this earlier I am not sure if it would have been either proper or prudent to have printed the charge against the Marquis of Hastings, however true it may be. It

is rather serious to state so broadly that he furnished Tommy Moore *with libels* against the king. Nothing would delight the Whigs and their worthy ally, the Chief Commissioner, so much as getting me into the jury court again. This is an expense I would not be fond of encountering again. I am as little fearful as most people, but I would really beg of you to weigh consequences when you are cutting right and left. . . .

The attack upon Roscoe is most just and carefully done; but for two reasons I would leave it to yourself to say would it be prudent for me to publish it. In the first place, he is a very old friend of the Professor's, and he would feel it very sore if Roscoe were to be attacked, as Mrs Wilson's relations are very much connected with him: this has saved Roscoe oftener than once. Now the Professor is getting into better spirits and is giving me articles, therefore you will see that it is necessary to avoid any annoyance to him. But in the second place, such an article would absolutely horrify my poor friend Cadell, who is at present about to bring out a new edition of some of Roscoe's books, and had a large interest in his edition of Pope. Now whatever Roscoe may be, is it worth while to flay him in this way, when there is a chance of it being hurtful to me individually? I would always hope you would place yourself somewhat in my situation, though I would never expect you for one moment to write merely for my personal objects.

The following note, however, will show how Maginn was trusted and depended upon, notwithstanding all his faults, as long as trust was possible:—

W. Blackwood to Dr Maginn.

'Maga' has been much injured by the coarse and reckless vein in which many things have been written. Anything approaching to grossness or profane feeling make it a sealed book to many families, and every little slip is magnified into a mighty offence. I am as watchful as I can be in respect to this, and entreat you to avoid everything of the sort. You and L. are apt to get into this strain; and then the work is often so much

to my taste, that I do not perceive the wretchedness till it is too late.

I feel much indebted to you for what you say about the articles we ought to avoid or leave for 'Maga.' It is in this way that you can be of the most invaluable service to me. You are on the spot, and know how the pulse of the public beats. All depends upon catching the thing at the right moment. Here I am out of the world almost; and at times I am sick to death, not knowing which hand to turn to, from disappointments or botherations as to whether I should print or reject articles good enough in themselves, but not the kind of thing they ought to be.

I may add here, though a little out of date, the special charm which Blackwood and his contributors found in Maginn's style, which is whimsical enough, considering that both Wilson and Lockhart were no inconsiderable masters of language :—

There is one peculiar excellence in this writer which strikes us Scotsmen, his easy idiomatic English. No *Scotsman, however practised as a writer, is master of the English tongue so as to be able to write in this way.* Sir Walter in his novels writes the Scotch with the most delightful naïveté. But I am attempting the small critic myself, which is very foreign to my *métier.*

"Yours," he says to another anonymous contributor, "was the only striking article in the last number, and gave great satisfaction to our Scotch readers, being in fact written with that elegance and simplicity which Scotsmen can admire without being able to imitate."

No amount of good counsel, however, had any effect on Maginn. He went on, after many years' experience, in the same reckless way, and even led Lockhart astray, as has been seen, into a return to the wild fun of the 'Noctes,' after both should have

learned wisdom. Maginn's career in London was neither happy nor respectable. He wrote for the 'John Bull' and other papers, selling his praise or his censure as it might be wanted, until both ceased to be of any value. He became a hurried, irregular, and harassed journalist, irregular in life as well as in his profession, carrying the light-hearted satire and fun of his youth into servility and miserable personal abuse. He became the great prop of 'Fraser's Magazine' when established, and there set up an imitated 'Noctes' and Symposia of various kinds, written with ease and ever a more reckless and flying pen, and less regard (he had never shown much) to decency and good manners. Maginn was the one among that joyous band who paid the penalty of the follies which they all more or less committed. He was the one to whom these follies were not the wild oats of youth, but the tares that choked all the good seed. Who can formulate any moral from such a sad history, or say he was more to blame than his peers? He had all the gracious qualities — a man lovable, generous, kind. But that dismal deterioration, which is a more dreadful consequence than even the inevitable ruin of life which attends such a headlong career, at last separated from him almost all his friends, whose correspondence is full of regretful notes of the gradually accomplished downfall. In the letters of the younger Blackwoods during the forties, he appears as a melancholy ghost coming and going about the office in Pall Mall, an apparition filling the young men with speechless horror and pity.

Yet 'Fraser's Magazine' made him for a time the centre of a new group, and might have given him another chance; and here he formed an acquaint-

ance with young Thackeray, who, I find, was munificent in his generosity and kindness to the unfortunate writer, and took him, as has been already noted, for the original of his Captain Shandon in 'Pendennis' —though I cannot but think the portrait is more flattering in some points and darker in others than it might have been. He died in 1842, under fifty, leaving only a lamentable memory behind him — his mirth, his wit, his gay heart, his generous impulses and kind actions all "writ in water" and forgotten. Yet Lockhart continued as long as he lived to be serviceable to his wife and children, and found some careless yet touching verses to say over his grave :—

"Here early to bed lies kind William Maginn,
Who with genius, wit, learning, life's trophies to win,
Had neither great lord nor rich cit of his kin,
Nor discretion to set himself up as to tin.
So his portion soon spent, like the poor heir of Lynn,
He turned author while yet was no beard on his chin.
And whoever was out or whoever was in,
For your Tories his fine Irish brains he would spin,
Who received rhyme and prose with a promising grin :
'Go ahead, you queer fish, and more power to your fin !'
But to save from starvation stirred never a pin.
Light for long was his heart though his breeches were thin ;
But at last he was beat, and sought help from the bin
(All the same to the Doctor, from claret to gin),
Which led swiftly to gaol, with consumption within :
It was much, when the bones rattled loose in his skin,
He got leave to die here, out of Babylon's din.
Barring drink and the girls, I ne'er heard of a sin :
Many worse, better few, than bright broken Maginn."

CHAPTER IX.

COLERIDGE—DE QUINCEY.

A MAGNANIMOUS POET—"THE SCHEME UPON WHICH A MAGAZINE SHOULD BE CONDUCTED"—THE EDITOR'S DIPLOMATIC REPLY—THE CHRISTABELLIAD—MAGNIFICENT SCHEMES OF WORK—AN ALARMING SEIZURE—COLERIDGE'S PRAISE OF DE QUINCEY'S STYLE—A TRIBUTE TO 'MAGA'—AN ELEGIAC PLUSQUAM SESQUI SONNET TO MY TIN SHAVING-POT—THE MISERIES OF DE QUINCEY'S LIFE—DE QUINCEY'S INTRODUCTION BY CHRISTOPHER NORTH—AN UNPUNCTUAL CONTRIBUTOR—AN UNFORTUNATE PIECE OF HUMOUR AND ITS RESULT—A PLAUSIBLE APOLOGIST—PROJECTS FOR ARTICLES—THE 'QUARTERLY' *v.* 'MAGA'—DOMESTIC DIFFICULTIES—SYSTEMATIC PROMISES NEVER KEPT—THE PUBLISHER'S RESPECT FOR LITERATURE—A EULOGY OF MICHAEL SCOTT.

I HAVE no information how it was that Blackwood made acquaintance with Coleridge, or conceived the idea of turning him into a prop of the Magazine. Coleridge, one would have thought, had little reason, in the review of himself[1] and his works with which the existence of that periodical had begun, to think very well of Blackwood; but whether the poet was so magnanimous as to have forgiven or—which was

[1] This article, however, was followed, a few numbers later, by a defence of Coleridge, in which the principle, professed from the beginning, of receiving every reply sent by friends of the aggrieved author was most fully carried out; though no doubt in this case the reply was written by one of the brotherhood, if not by the original culprit himself.

the more likely way — too dreamy to have remembered that assault upon him, it is certain that he lent a not unwilling ear to Blackwood's suggestion that he had but to call at the office of Messrs Cadell & Davies any day with a little roll of MS. in order to procure ten guineas, in whole or part payment, whenever he pleased and as often as he pleased. That this was not to be the limit of the offered price was implied, but it was a sort of retaining fee, and evidence of good faith. Coleridge was already at Highgate in the curious retirement in which the rest of his life was spent when this proposal reached him; but he was still comparatively a young man, and evidently felt himself quite able to enter into the arena of active life. There had also been in the meantime *amende honorable* fully made in the Magazine by a most admiring and genial review.

Mr Blackwood's original letter to the poet I have unfortunately mislaid; but this is the answer to it, and the reader will be amused by the elaborate and detailed plan, to be accompanied by an equally elaborate theory as to the proper method of conducting a magazine, thus suddenly presented to the three extremely spontaneous and strong-willed individuals in whose hands the Magazine had already become a power, and who were as little troubled with plans and theories, and as clearly aware of what they intended to do—which was, in the first place, to take orders, or even advice, from no man—as any three in the kingdom. This was how, in sublime exaltation of theory and absolute unconsciousness of the complications and difficulties of combination, and the character and individuality of other men, the poet wrote from amid

the clouds. The letter, which belongs to the spring of 1819, is without date, except that of "Highgate":—

S. T. Coleridge to W. Blackwood.

Business which I could neither foresee nor evade deprived me both of the time and the disengaged mind which I had in intention appropriated to your service. It was, however, of such a kind as I must have discharged one time or other, and "all clear behind" is a good signal to march onward upon. On the receipt of your letter, and of the Magazine (for which accept my thanks), I waited on Mr Davies, the having been introduced to whom I regard as an obligation. I do indeed feel myself much obliged to you for having made me acquainted with a man of such genuine worth, and so much unostentatious good sense. Besides, I am always glad to have any one of my prejudices counteracted or overset, for I look upon them as so many puny heresies, and every dislike I am converted from, the better Catholic I am: and I honestly confess that my experience has tinged my opinions concerning the Trade with a rather sombre dye. God forbid that I should at any time or under any provocations have been guilty of so unchristian a thought, as to doubt that a Bookseller might be a truly good and honourable man; but still I am ashamed to say my belief was more strong in the *Posse* than the *Esse* thereof. Perhaps your experience of authors has been tit-for-tat with mine of your Brotherhood, and I trust we may both proceed as we have begun in making converts of each other in relation to our two selves at least. So leaving this half-earnest chit-chat, I come to the business of this letter. I informed you, my dear sir, that as to scissors and scraps, I have none in the first place, and secondly, they would neither answer my purpose nor yours in the present state of things. If I enter into any connection with your Magazine, it must be such a one as will justify me in devoting two-thirds of my time and—to one at least of my monthly communications—the utmost of my powers in my most genial moods.

The scheme upon which a Magazine should be conducted (and if so conducted would, I am convinced, outrun all rivalry) shall be communicated first to Messrs Cadell & Davies, and

then to you, so that you may have the advantage of their confidential opinion in addition to your own judgment. For I shall instruct Mr Davies to communicate his opinion of it to you, and not to me, in order that he may not be withheld by any feeling of delicacy from expressing the whole of his mind should it be unfavourable to the scheme, whether more or less.

Of this scheme part will, of course, be private, for your own eye, not that of the public: but the far larger portion will be produced in a sort of Letter or Essay on the Desiderata of a Magazine, and should you approve of the contents, I propose that you should annex to it a declaration of your perfect assent to the sentiments of your correspondent, and a sort of promise that the proprietors are determind to conduct their Magazine on the same principle to the best of their power. If either the scheme be rejected or my co-operation in the realisation of the same not agreed to, I then rely on your honour that no use shall be made of the same, but that it shall be sent back to me.

Let us then for a moment suppose the plan to have received your approbation and concurrence, and that I first supplied you monthly to the extent of two sheets, one article of which shall be (so far as my comparative talents and genius make it possible or probable) equivalent to the leading article in the 'Edinburgh' or 'Quarterly' Reviews (by leading, I mean that one article which is expected to be most talked of, as for instance, several of Mr Southey's in the 'Quarterly'), and that I shall be at all times ready to give my best advice and opinion with regard to the other parts of the Magazine, to be, as it were, your London editor or curator, and to exert my interest among my literary friends not being professional authors, to procure communications, to re-enliven for this purpose my correspondence abroad with several valued friends of mine who are of highest rank among the foreign Literati—in short, to give to the 'Edinburgh Magazine' the whole weight of my interest, name, and character, whatever they may be. What shall you consider as a due remuneration? Suppose that I shall write the first of June, and that every three months you are at liberty to reconsider the terms according as your experience may have been.

You may either attach the whole to the nominal price of the sheets furnished, or make the remuneration depend part

on the correspondence and part on my editorial labours. I neither do nor shall propose any terms myself, but will not suffer you to wait a single day, beyond the time required for the mutual receipt of the letters, without a decisive answer, Yes or No.

If, in your opinion, you do not find yourself able to hazard any deviation of consequence from your common price, it will be better to let it drop at once, for I use the words in their literal sense when I say that I could not assist you on such terms. For I dare not write what I cannot gladly own and expect an increase of reputation from. Others, with other subjects, might compose three sheets in the same time and with far less exertion than I *could* produce one. I may adopt the words which Mr Wordsworth once used to Longman: "You pay others, sir, for what they write; but you must pay me for what I do not write, for it is this [*i.e.*, the omissions, erasures, &c.] that costs me both time and toil." You shall receive my plan as soon after I hear from you as the post can convey it.

One can easily imagine the blank astonishment and momentary panic of surprise, soon modified by laughter, which must have fallen upon the committee of three, which was about as likely to submit to this solemn sway as were the steeds of the sun to obey the hand of Phaëthon. Still less was the one responsible member of that government likely to bind himself with new rules. Mr Blackwood replied gravely, restating his previous offers, but little more. He begins by explaining that his suggestion regarding Scraps did not imply that it was Scraps alone he wanted, but only that he would rather have the crumbs that fell from the Master's table than no bread at all:—

W. Blackwood to S. T. Coleridge.

14 *April* 1819.

All I meant by your sending scraps was simply this, that if you had been otherwise occupied, and had not had leisure to

prepare the very interesting and important communications you were so good as say you would send for the Magazine, we would be happy to receive anything, however short, that you might have lying beside you. I anxiously hope I shall have the pleasure of hearing from you in a post or two, and that you will as soon as possible favour us with some of those communications you mentioned to me. With regard to the payment, you may rest assured it will be liberal. I have it not in my power to say more than ten guineas per sheet; but as I mentioned to you, the Editor has it in his power to add to this allowance according to the value of the articles.

I was surprised to find by Mr Davies' letter that you had listened to the calumnies and falsehoods of a disappointed party, who have vainly attempted to run down the Magazine. That there were some articles in the early numbers which displayed rather too much of a personal tone I will not pretend to deny; but these bear a very small proportion to the great mass of able and clever papers which are free from this fault, and for many months past there has been nothing of the kind. I was still more astonished at what you mentioned to Mr Davies with regard to a sum being subscribed to bear me harmless in penalties from lawsuits, &c. This is only one of the many calumnies invented by Constable, Hunt, Hazlitt, & Co.: the folly of such a thing is only equalled by its utter falsehood.

I hope that I have now said enough, and that you will be perfectly satisfied that the Magazine is a work which it will be both creditable and useful for you to lend your aid to.

Lockhart also replied anonymously, in the guise of the editor of the Magazine, to this letter, with an expression of much pleasure in the prospect of seeing the "Method of conducting a Magazine," but cautiously refraining from any promise to adopt its suggestions, and with cordial but vague assurances as to the liberality of the payments. "A selection from Mr Coleridge's Correspondence" was published in the Magazine in October 1821, and there in a "Letter to Mr

Blackwood" the great scheme was alluded to, and its necessity urged; but with a vagueness which could affect no one, the writer plunging immediately into a letter to a "Junior Soph at Cambridge," upon many abstruse subjects, and dropping the Magazine. Coleridge was easily, it would seem, got down from this very high horse, and became an occasional contributor — indeed, for some time a tolerably frequent one. The reader will remember that both Wilson and Lockhart urge that his contributions should continue, notwithstanding that they pronounce him "mad," yet giving forth such jewels in his madness as no one else could supply. The few letters that have been preserved from his hand are scattered over a long period; but in the belief that the public will gladly hail every unpublished word from Coleridge, and as the letters are sublimely superior to all questions of time or the events of the moment, I feel justified, though there is more than a dozen years between the probable dates, to give the whole as they come:—

S. T. Coleridge to W. Blackwood.

June 30, 1819.

I am just returned from a coaching tour in the aguish parts of Essex, and find your letters and a note from Mr Davies, in consequence of which I dine with him on Friday. At present I can only express my thanks for the Editor's letter, and entreat you to assure him that I find it most candid and satisfactory, the proposal of the two sheets *probationary* equally fair and judicious. Of course I can feel no objection to a compliance with it. A very slight personal acquaintance with me would have enabled the Editor to take for granted that I should not be offended with the droll Christabelliad. None of Mr O'Doherty's readers will peruse it with less pain, few with greater pleasure. I should indeed be wanting both to myself

and to common-sense if I did not regard it as a compliment, and that of no ordinary kind, for, not to mention the names with which my own stands in juxtaposition, it would be strange if a man of O'Doherty's undoubted genius should have employed so much wit, humour, and general power of mind on a work wholly without worth or character. Let only no poison of personal moral calumny be inserted, and a good laugh is a good thing; and I should be sorry, by making a wry face, to transfer it from my Lady Christabel to myself. From an *able* vindication of pernicious principles, I *should* receive severe pain, did I not persuade myself that your Magazine is open to every fair, liberal, and manly answer. Anything is better than suppression or confuting a man's work by trying to ruin his fortunes. Besides, it is but too true that the ordinary and popular arguments in support of our Faith, both moral and theological, have more show than *stuff*. I never take up a work entitled Evidences or the like, but I feel half a mind to write a book to be called Religion defended against its defenders. I can only say for myself, Let but the poison be *stuff* of the *mind*, not the impudence of Ignorance nor incentives of Passion, and I dare rely on the Antidote, and shall never consider a bold permission of the liberty of the Press an objection to any work which admits both sides, when both are guarded by talent and decency, and neither if without them.

The following seems to refer to a book to be published by Blackwood, but the undertaking was apparently never completed :—

41 Sloane Street, *Feb.* 24, 1826.

Your letter has rather alarmed me by mentioning that you had not received my packet or letter by Cadell's parcel of February 8th. I sent one with a note. Certainly the quantity that was sent was small, not much more than a chapter, but still the loss would be serious. You promised me to go to press as soon as the 2nd volume was in your hands. It is and has been with you. I will send more by the 30th, and the work will be concluded *undoubtedly* by the 15th or 16th of March. Therefore I entreat you not to delay; put it to press anywhere.

Otherwise the season will be lost, and I will be unable to get ready a consecutive book for next season, on which I count. I have given time, pains, everything to this; and the importance I attach to it is evident from the circumstance that though extremely in want of money, I have not hurried with the book, nor scribbled it in dull or distracted moments, as I might at any time, and got through it in three or four days. As to quitting the country, I shall not do it if I can help it, most certainly.

20th October 1829.

Dear Sir,—This is my birthday. But for the last fifteen or sixteen years I have (like most other men of the same date, I suspect) so lost the inclination to count the same from any Birth but that of our Lord that I am not sure whether it is the 57th or the 58th. This, however, I know, that for many years back, once or twice or thrice at least in every Twelvemonth, it has been (as the religious of the olden times were wont to phrase it) "borne in on my mind" that I ought to write to you and thank you for your long-continued and very kind attention in sending me your Magazine. In a small volume on the right *Idea* of the Constitution in Church and State, which you will receive I think within a fortnight, and which but for severe sickness you would have received many months ago, you will find how highly I estimate the favour. I never intentionally flattered, and I am now old enough to measure my words, and in sober earnest I can say, that the spirit with which it is supported excites not only my admiration but my wonder. I see but one rock the Magazine is likely to strike on: the (only however of late) increasing proportion of space allotted to party politics, and especially to political economy. I persuade myself that you will pardon my frankness when I declare my opinion that the Essays on the subject last-named, though written with great spirit, like everything else in the Magazine, are not in point of reasoning or breadth and depth of information equal to the political articles. By my little volume you will see that I am as little an admirer or convert of Ricardo and M'Culloch as your correspondent. But my opinion of the quality of the literary or economical articles forms no part of my objection. It is only the quantity, the

relative proportion, and this again only as a subject of apprehension for the future rather than of complaint for the past. For Blackwood and Sir Walter's novels have been my comforters in many a sleepless night when I should but for them have been comfortless. I assure you that were I a man in easy circumstances I should need no pecuniary motive to be a frequent contributor, and the liberal terms you offered me might well be thought to supply that motive, my circumstances being what, alas! they are. But the fact is that, from whatever cause, it is out of my power to write anything for the press, except with the full effort of my mind, or to send off anything that is not the *best* I can make it. The consequence is that I compose and write three pages for every one that goes to the Printer, so that I could very well afford to *give* the Publisher all that I send, if he would pay me for all that, though written with the same care and effort, I keep behind.

But before I proceed, let me ask you one question occasioned by the L'envoy of your last number respecting the plethora of 'Maga.' Are your existing stores so abundant as to supersede the wish for any contributions at present? Do not, I entreat you, my dear sir, imagine that I shall be wounded by your frankly telling me so, if so it be.

I speak now therefore only on the supposition that a certain number of articles with my name would be, if not serviceable, at least acceptable. I have at present—first: and this I dare avow that I should send in confident anticipation of its receiving the admirable Christopher's suffrage as original, amusing, and suited to the spirit of the Magazine—a critique expository and vindicatory of Francis Rabelais' great work. 2. Ditto on the Don Quixote. The first is divided into three chapters, each of which, so far as I can calculate, will supply about a third of one of your sheets. 3. An article entitled, A Sequel to the Catholic Bill and the Free Trade measure, or What is to be done now? 4. A Lyrical Tale, 250 lines. 5. Three or four other poems, altogether about the same number of lines. If I did not think them creditable to me, or if my Friends thought otherwise, I would not offer them to you.

Here we come to an abrupt conclusion, and whether

the admirable Christopher gave his suffrage or not, none of these projects seems to have come to light in the Magazine.

Some time later Coleridge again appears, this time in the character of a peace-maker. The person on whose behalf he interferes was, I imagined, the poet Proctor, otherwise Barry Cornwall; but it appears now more probable that it was F. Hardman, who seems to have been supposed to be guilty of putting forth as original the English translation of a German work already known. But the interest of the letter is in its statements about himself. We ascertain from the postmark that it was sent from Highgate, May 15, 1830:—

S. T. Coleridge to W. Blackwood.

Within a few days after the receipt of your letter enclosing an order for £10 on Messrs Cadell—which I have destroyed, it being against one of my rules to receive payment for work not delivered, having learnt from experience that by making me feel uneasy and bound it would be more likely to prevent than to expedite the execution, not the less however thanking you for the kindness intended,—within a few days from this, I say, the Illness commenced which, in a succession of relapses so close to each other as to form one chain of distemper, has conducted me to the very brink of the grave, through sufferings that removed all horror from the anticipation; and seems (so my anxious friends hope and wish to believe) to have reached its height and crisis in an attack during sleep: the sum of which is, that a noise of some heavy body falling having alarmed one of the servants then on the stairs, I was found on the floor pulseless and senseless, and continued thus about half an hour, when animation was restored, chiefly, I believe, by means of mustard-plasters applied to the chest and abdomen. But there was no appearance of convulsion, the expression of the countenance tranquil, and all my faculties returned entire,

and in the first instance exactly as from ordinary sleep. Indeed, before I had opened my eyes, I merely found that my medical friends and Mrs Gilman were flustering over me: my first words were, "What a mystery we are! What a problem is presented in the strange contrast between the imperishability of our thoughts and the perishable fugacious nature of our consciousness," when I heard the voice of my friend exclaiming, "Thank God! however, there is nothing of apoplexy in this seizure." From this time I have been freed from pain, and my nervous system more tranquil than had been the case for months and months before. Only, my strength comes back very, very slowly; and though my mind is as active and vigorous as in the best times, and I sufficiently disposed to exert it, I cannot bear the consequences of exertion.

Now, my dear sir! you will scarcely guess my motive for boring you with the dull sick-bed detail of and all about myself, so I must tell you. I am aware that the man who volunteers his advice and, unasked, obtrudes his opinion on another, runs the risk of being set down for a self-sufficient coxcomb, or of being suspected of some selfish view: and the risk is the greater when the advisee happens to be a remarkably prosperous and influencive man who, like the centurion in the Gospel, can say Go, and he goeth; Do this, and he doeth it. And I would fain have you feel how bitter in the existing condition of my health—and with an insupportable presentiment haunting me every night as I lay my head on my pillow that I shall go off in my sleep, as my dear father did, whose very *facsimile* I am, both in body and mind,—I can be disposed to play the officious or impertinent part, or to profess friendly purposes as a pretext for gratifying a silly vanity or giving vent to the flatulence of self-opinion. And now for the point.

My respected friend, the author of the 'Colonna,' &c., has induced me to read with attention the letters that have passed between you and him respecting the untoward accident of the 'Headsman'; and I seem to feel it will be a more frank and friendly course to communicate the impression left on my mind and my mistaken, perhaps, but assuredly most sincere and conscientious judgment on the disputed point, directly to yourself. Bear with me, then, when, after the public avowal of my ad-

miration for your 'Maga,' page 147 of 'Coleridge on the Constitution according to the Idea' (*I hope you have received the copy of the 2nd edition, which I ordered to be sent to you*), you will not suspect me of any want of zeal for you and yours if I say that:

First, I have looked carefully over the bond, as Shylock says, and can nowhere find that any approach to omniscience on the part of your correspondent had been promised or stipulated for: and, verily, something very like it he must be supposed to possess, before it can be naturally required of him that he should be cognizant of every tale and novelette, in whatever vehicle and under whatever name, published during the last twenty years, or even the last five, when we have had such a rank crop of them that have beggared geography to furnish them with distinct names, in one volume or two, or three, besides annuals, and monthlies, and weeklies, that even novelty itself seems flat, and curiosity turns yellow at the sight of a Hungarian or a Californian tale, as an alderman under the horrors of surfeit might be supposed to do at a Scotch haggis steaming up against him; all short of this impracticable Bibliography, all that your correspondent could be expected or had undertaken to do, he assuredly did. His orders to his foreign correspondent were to send works fresh from the press, or recently published. Kruse is a popular novelist, to whose previous publications my friend was no stranger, and from the title-page of the volume itself a man must be a conjuror to have conceived any suspicion that there had been an earlier edition, or that the contents had appeared in another form.

But as this letter *about myself* was intended for yourself alone, while the other paper which states in a somewhat less rambling and unbusiness-like style my sentiments on the point in question will probably be communicated to you through your correspondent, I will only add two points which seem to me worth considering. 1st. That your correspondent has, to my knowledge, spared neither trouble nor expense to procure the best information from foreigners of good taste, and the earliest arrival of the books well spoken of, and that from his former command, and his existing personal connections with the Continent, he possesses more than ordinary facilities. Further, that he is a man of talent and a neat stylist, you

know, and that he is a man of the highest respectability and purest honour you may believe on my assurance. 2nd. Have you not overrated the inconvenience of [this piece of] *unluck?* Why, bless me! ten well-written [lines describing] the case would have converted it into an additional interest. In all that forms the true comparative merit of a Tale of this kind the contributions to your Magazine have so unmeasurably the advantage. Oh that I could persuade you how much more likely to be ultimately injurious is the recent change of the character of 'Maga' by the increasing disproportion of the party politics articles, with the feelings and passions of which there is *no* sympathy in England, and with the subjects themselves only a languid exhausted interest. I speak without any reference to their merits or demerits as compositions. Be assured you have few more zealous advocates and no more sincere well-wisher than your aged friend, S. T. COLERIDGE.

S. T. Coleridge to W. Blackwood.

May 26, 1832.

I have no means of procuring a frank; and I cannot but fear that the disproportion between the contents of my last, and the postage of an Edinburgh letter from London, may argue a somewhat unconscientious self-appreciation on the part of the Writer, and the more so that it omitted what yet was a fact foremost and apparent in my mind; *videlicet*, the sense of your kind attentions to me, my cordial thanks for the 'Odd Book,' and my old friend De Quincey's 'Klosterheim.' It is now about the second year of my imprisonment to my Bad (?) Book Attic, and from fever and languor I crawl through a book as cumbrously as a Fly through a Milk-splash, and the more the book interests me the slower is my progress. And I have read nothing since the 'Quentin Durward' which would compare in interest with 'Klosterheim': and in purity of style and idiom, in which the Scholar is ever implied, and the scholarly never obtrudes itself, it reaches an excellence[1] to which Sir W. Scott, with all the countless unaffected conversational charms

[1] *Note of Coleridge.*—With a few exceptions, as "knock up," "were pulled up," the inevitables of that human iscoria from which no writer in his senses ever hopes to secure an immunity. *N.B.*—In writing this

and on-carryingness of his Diction, appears never to have aspired, rather than to have fallen short of. The 'Odd Book' I hope to commence to-morrow. I refer to it now chiefly as an excuse for expressing the regrets I felt and feel that Mr K. left London, and that I had no opportunity of shaking [his hand] and giving him an old Poet's and Fellow-Christian's blessing. But what shall I say of what I owe to you for the delight and comfort and instruction of the Ed. Magazine, and especially for the whole series of the two years, during which Sickness and Sorrow have made such a visitor and Bedside Comforter a *Friend indeed*, for it has been a Friend in Need. If I were to express half of what I think and feel concerning the Magazine I should give the heartless slanderers of the Catilinarian press a tempting pretext for charging me with flattery. But, nevertheless, I should accuse myself of cowardice and ingratitude if I hesitated to avow and assert my conviction that in the long, never-flagging Height and Sustainedness of irony, in the continuity, variety, and strength of wing, and in the value, the worth, the deep importance of the moral and political truths which it has streamed forth with eloquent wisdom, 'Blackwood's Magazine' is an unprecedented Phenomenon in the world of letters, and forms the golden—alas! the only—remaining link between the Periodical Press and the enduring literature of Great Britain. If ever I was delighted with what, at the same moment, I felt as a gross flattery, it was on the Belief entertained by several of my friends that the 13 articles on Reform, the French Revolution, &c., had been contributed by me; and if perfect identity of sentiment, principle, and faith and feeling could excuse the mistake, it might stand within the conditions of a Pardon. But at no period of my life could I have produced such a union of the Popular and the Profound. Your Magazine is everywhere, and therefore supersedes the necessity of any further publication. Still I cannot but long to possess these, and its congeners of the last three years, in a couple of volumes printed like the 'Klosterheim.'

I had read only to page 230. I have since finished and carefully revised the volume, and for all that follows from page 23 I have much to say which De Quincey will suffer me to say to himself should I have strength to put it down.

Having now given the relief of an *Outlet* to the "gathering of the waters," to the feelings and convictions that have so long been astir within me, do me the justice to believe that it is from far other impulses than those of authorial vanity and craving for Praise that I give vent to my Regret that no notice was taken of my 'Essay on the Constitution; or, Church and State according to the Idea,' a copy of both the first and the second edition of which I expressly desired the Publisher to transmit to you. If I know my own heart, it is the deep sense I have of the truth, urgency, and importance of the Principles set out in that work, which alone made me not ambitious of, but anxious for, its being noticed in your Magazine; and allow me to observe that Mons. Thiers' speech on the question of hereditary Peerage was almost a translation from the first part of my Essay.

I will now try to pay virtually half the postage of this letter by transcribing for you, if worth your acceptance, a pathetic overflowing Sonnet of your truly obliged

S. T. Coleridge.

An Elegiac plusquam sesqui Sonnet to my Tin Shaving-pot.

My tiny Tin, my omnium usuum Scout,
My Blackie, fair though black, the wanton fire
Hath long bit off thy pert, one-nostrill'd snout,
Unhinged thy lid, and wrought laxation dire.
When of thy arching arm the handless wrist
Pressed on thy sides mid treacherous coal and grate,
Twice hast thou trembled, and in rebel mist
With smoke and sooty films colleagued in fate
Flown in my face: yet did I not upbraid
Thy crazy cranks, but held thee the more dear,
And morning after morning with thee played
At Rouge et Noir, a game of Hope and Fear.
And must we part? My tears on the hot Hob
Say Iss! Iss! Iss! Hard by the top-bar reeks,
And to each tear makes answer with a sob.
The Cambrian's Broth is none the worse for leeks,
Rents are the landed Noble's pride and glee,
Holes, side and bottom, both to Man and Gun
Are seemly: Would that it were so with thee;
But 'tis not so: and let Time's will be done.
Blackie, adieu! My Blackie, blame not me!
I turn'd not you away. 'Twas you that *run*.

S. T. C.

This sonnet and a half, so called by the author, with its elaborate puns, is written without any distinction of line on the flaps of the portentous sheet of foolscap which formed Coleridge's letter. The present generation can only regard with alarm the communications which our fathers crammed into every corner of a sheet, at the risk of losing an occasional word, important to the sense, but swallowed up under the seal, or torn in opening the letter. The writer, though old, can but just remember as a child the eager desire for franks, the seizure of every "private hand," even the surreptitious introduction into brown paper parcels of the letters which in those economical days were so "dear" that it was necessary to justify them by having really something, and as much as possible, to say—a good pennyworth in short. That it was not worth the postage was the contemptuous verdict on many a letter—a judgment to which all the greater force was given by the fact that the postage was generally paid by the recipient, not by the sender, of the letter, under a convenient idea that a prepaid letter was less safe.

The transition from Coleridge to De Quincey is one not difficult to make. There are many points of resemblance between them, going so far even as to a certain likeness between their handwriting, though the tiny scribbled notes of the Opium-Eater, so often sent by the hand of an abashed son who had to wait for the reply, are very different from the elder poet's foolscap. Few readers need to be told the story of De Quincey, that curious figure in liter-

ature, with his strange adventures, his still stranger existence, the pseudo-high life of his beginning, the pitiful and hopeless poverty of his end. We get to feel, as we pursue the course of the correspondence, a painful and pitying sense of all the straits which he details at full length in every particular, with a kind of curious pleasure in the unfolding of these poor and dreadful secrets. Poverty is sometimes a noble and respectable thing, and when the issues have any sort of greatness there is a kind of excitement in the alternate downfalls and successes of the penniless but courageous struggle. But when the strife is for a few pounds, when the milkman's bill is the rock in the way, and shillings and pence the munitions of war, the echo of that dreary and hopeless fighting in the dark has nothing but misery in it. De Quincey puts forth his privations, his wanderings about from one lodging to another, sometimes waylaid in his bed by a furious creditor, sometimes suffering torture for want of a box of seidlitz powders, always with elaborate explanation of how in the extraordinary combinations of fate it has come to be so, but can never by any calculation of human probabilities be so again — to the publisher who never seems to refuse the necessary dole, but inevitably is sometimes a little impatient and provoked by the perpetual messengers and the dole on the other side of a page or two at a time. It was through Wilson, who knew De Quincey while he lived, a worshipper, satellite, and critic of the band of poets in the Lake Country, that he was first introduced to Mr Blackwood and the Magazine; but from the first the relations between this

curious being, so elf-like in all his ways, and the serious and sensible publisher, whose almost boundless toleration for shortcomings of another character made him perhaps the more impatient of this fine-spoken and helpless apologist, were rather stormy. Mr Blackwood welcomed him to the Magazine in his usual courteous way, with that enthusiasm for literary ability which made him so eager in his reception of every able and eloquent new contributor: yet had many disappointments to undergo ere he could be got into harness.

W. Blackwood to T. De Quincey.

EDINBURGH, *August* 26, 1820.

It is a remark warranted by reason, not to mention a higher sanction, that "hope deferred maketh the heart sick." I shall still, however, hope against hope that you will yet fulfil your long bygone engagement to the Magazine. I am the more encouraged to expect this from what you mentioned in a letter to the Professor the other day. Whatever you choose to send, whether long or short, will always be acceptable. By desire of Professor Wilson I send you Dr Brown's work on Cause and Effect, trusting that I will have the pleasure of hearing from you ere long.

This agreeable mood continues for some time; and on December 18 of the same year Mr Blackwood seems to welcome a contribution with the same pleasure with which he had anticipated one. De Quincey by this time had come to Edinburgh, for the note is addressed to Northumberland Street:—

W. Blackwood to T. De Quincey.

I am so happy to receive anything from you that your two pages appear like the 24 of any one else, because, now that you are fairly begun, I feel confident that you will do justice to

yourself. It was the knowing what you *could do* if you were once *resolved to do* which made my repeated disappointments so very mortifying to me. This is now all happily over, because, as the French say, the first step is the grand affair.

Mr Blackwood, the reader will perceive, always insisted upon the point that his contributors should do justice to themselves. With a fine pride he ignores the possibility of any ineptitude on their part injuring the Magazine. That they should do the best for themselves, and vindicate their own character and gifts, is what he always implores with emotion in his voice. The reader will remember his almost impassioned entreaties of the same kind to both Lockhart and Wilson. As early as the beginning of the next year, however, he had begun to see how slippery the new contributor was, and the following letter was evidently intended, like the sharp clap of the bladder in Swift's Laputa, to bring the philosopher to a sense of the waking necessities of earth :—

W. Blackwood to T. De Quincey.

6 *January* 1821.

I must tell you frankly at once that your mode of furnishing articles will neither answer your own purpose nor mine. For instance, this article which you have not yet finished you positively promised to have with me complete on Tuesday by two o'clock. No doubt you may have had many unavoidable causes for the delay: still, this is nothing to a man of business, who, as he adheres to his own engagements, expects equal punctuality in those who engage with him. It is quite unnecessary, as I have again and again told you, to make any inquiry as to whether an article will be in time. A good article is always in time.

I hope you will send me, as you again promised, the remainder of your article this evening, and the more you can do next week of any others so much the better.

The reply must have been written at once on the same night:—

T. De Quincey to W. Blackwood.

Saturday night, 6th January.

I will not dispute with you; in this case I am gagged, having paid away your ten guineas, which I am now heartily sorry that ever I did.

I now send you four pages more. The remainder (4 pages) is written, if the printers could read it; but as I fear they could not, I am copying as fast as possible—and if you will let me know how late I can send up to-night, I will take care you shall have it.

"A good article," you say, "is always in time." Well, mine is a good one—a very good one—and therefore in time. For he who does not laugh at the whole latter part (especially from page 8 to 20) is fit for treasons, &c.

You make one mistake, indeed two, but I will notice only one. I have had, you say, no doubt many unavoidable reasons for the delay. Now, in fact I have not; scarcely any at all, excepting my own native stupidity, which I greatly regret, but cannot remedy. I move slowly whenever I am uncommonly witty. Nevertheless, if you are more particular about quantity than quality I am perfectly ready to oblige you by changing my style. But articles as droll as this I really cannot produce faster; dull reviews, morality, &c. (and some wit, such as some I saw in your December No.), as fast as you please. In fact I have never left my paper, except on Thursday once to see Prof. Wilson—twice during the week to get some breakfast—dinner every day, and to write three letters this morning.

De Quincey was sufficiently ill-advised to follow this letter on the Monday with another, adding what we may imagine was meant for banter upon the recent issues of the Magazine, and the necessity there evidently was for exertion on his own part: but which was in a tone unfortunately very little adapted to please his correspondent.

T. De Quincey to W. Blackwood.

Noon, Monday.

As you did not send me word whither and how late I might send on Saturday night, the MS. lay here all yesterday. For on Sunday I know not where my man's abode is. This morning I have only just got up; from what I said on Saturday night I concluded you would send for it, but as you have not, here it is—as soon as I have seen the light.

If Wilson and Lockhart do not put themselves forward for the Magazine, I foresee that the entire weight of supporting it must rest on my shoulders. I see clearly that I must be its Atlas. For excepting our friend Gillies's translation (from a cursed dull thing though), and excepting that spirited political article at the end, a more dreary collection of dulness and royal stupidity never did this world see gathered together than the December number exhibits. Positively it would sink any work in the world. No, no! I see clearly that I must write it all myself—except one sheet, which I will leave to Gillies, and a few pp. to the other man.

And this horrible dulness, which is enough to inflict apoplexy, happens to coincide with these infernal articles from London. And to these it seems we are to knock under! What a craven the fellow must be who advised such a piece of devilish cowardice. Whoever he be, I hope to God he will soon meet with a halter—even if it were my dear friend Professor Wilson.

I am hard at work, being determined to save the Magazine from the fate which its stupidity merits.

To this there came a swift and sharp reply. Blackwood was touched in his tenderest point, and as ready as ever to cut down any blasphemer:—

W. Blackwood to T. De Quincey.

8 *January* 1821.

I can only excuse your letter, which I received to-day, by supposing that you were hardly awake when you wrote it. When I apply to you to be the Atlas of my Magazine it will

be time enough for you to undertake the burthen. And in the meantime I must beg leave to say that if you cannot send me anything better than the "English Lakes," it will be quite unnecessary for you to give yourself any further trouble about the Magazine.

Next day brought a return in this rapid correspondence. De Quincey, too, was stung to the heart; but he was not concise like his opponent, and could not help reasoning upon the situation:—

T. De Quincey to W. Blackwood.

Tuesday morning, January 9.

You are pleased to doubt whether I was awake when I wrote my note of yesterday morning. With a good deal more reason might I doubt whether the person were awake who either read my note or wrote the answer to it, which I received last night. I shall not, however, enter into any dispute; and shall as little as possible in future—whether our connection be long or short—trouble you with any notes at all, sleeping or waking.

If I expressed my opinions too freely (as it seems) on your Magazine, I did so in the full belief, first, that you must by this time be perfectly indifferent to the opinions of any one or any thousand persons on the whole work even, much more on any single number.

And, secondly, that the relation in which I stood (or fancied I stood) to the Magazine as a regular contributor elect, entitled me to any number of comments or jokes on the work (I myself being at all times tolerant of jokes, whether good or bad, on my own compositions). In this I might be wrong; and if I gave you any pain, I much regret it. On the other hand, it does not appear to me that if my MS. did not happen to suit your work, you were therefore entitled to favour me with your criticism upon it. The Magazine which I criticised was not (I believe) your own composition; and according to the usage of the world, if I took any liberty, and some retort seemed to you necessary, I believe it would have been quite a sufficient one to throw back upon my hands the labour of a week.

As to my being the Atlas of your Magazine (though I suppose no person could gather from my note that that was the object of my *serious* ambition), you will give me leave to observe that on the supposition of my being a contributor to that work —it could not depend on your will or mine whether the readers of it should regard me in that light.

I have now only to add that I shall complete my 24 pages, and you will of course exercise your discretion in determining whether they shall go into your Magazine.

I can find no answer from Mr Blackwood to this letter; probably none was needed. There is no reason, however, to suppose that the interchange of musketry came to any lengthened pause. Indeed a great number of fleeting little notes, like scraps of paper collected out of a waste-basket, are in existence, all about and about the endless manufacture of articles, and the equally endless small payments, two or three pages, two or three pounds, with innumerable apologies and explanations, showing elaborately from one side how this and that were the sole things possible to be done, which passed from hand to hand. De Quincey rarely permitted the ordinary price of a piece of work to reach him unbroken—nor conveyed that piece of work entire to the printing house. But it would be needless and undesirable to thread the twisted labyrinth of this correspondence. The first letter of any length or interest which turns up is absolutely without date, but not perhaps very much later than the one we have already quoted, as it returns to a similar theme:—

T. De Quincey to W. Blackwood.

I do "keep my word" not "once" merely but always—when I am aware it is pledged. The best way therefore for us in all cases will be, after any conversation, to say to each other, Now let us

not part without understanding how far any formal engagement (and if any, what engagement precisely) has been contracted between us. In the present case I cannot be in any doubt as to my views on this point, though it seems that you took a different view of it. Which of us is right I will not take upon myself to say; but here is my conscientious belief about it, up to the moment when I saw Professor Wilson yesterday. I had always understood that the 10th was the latest day on which anything could be received with any chance of publication in the forthcoming number. Under this impression I took care to be in Edinburgh time enough before that day to allow of my writing a sheet, and I put myself to some inconvenience, and an extra expense of 3½ guineas in post-chaises, that I might be in time. Consequently one of my first questions was: Am I in time with one sheet for *this* month's Magazine? meaning if I *was* in time to sit down there and then, to call on no soul till it was finished, scarcely to sleep if that should be necessary. But this question I found it impossible to resolve, whether through you or through Wilson. "Never mind about that," you both said; "the Magazine is always going on. It cannot come amiss," and so on. Doubtless, thought I, the article will be printed some time or other if it is approved; but if I have lost my pains, and needlessly thrown away money in hastening up now—when a week hence would have been soon enough (or perhaps even three weeks)—why should I sit up night and day to produce by a few days earlier what after all may lie in a drawer for 10 days or a fortnight after it is sent? Having failed with yourself, I tried Wilson and Gillies upon this point, but neither could assure me if it was even possible for me to be inserted this month. Eight pages the former said dubiously might get in perhaps; he did not exactly know. "But what signifies that," they said, "if you are paid immediately?" First, that I should write with more spirit being sure of an early insertion. Secondly, as to money, it is clear that I can be allowed to write more in two numbers (that for this month and that for the next) than for one only. If I have lost the chance for the forthcoming number, all motive for instant and increasing exertion and thought is done away.

To this account I have only to add three memoranda:—

1. In spite of my disappointment, here explained, in respect to the number immediately forthcoming, I have been writing keenly; and I hope to send you something in the course of the day, but at latest (and here I am promising) by to-morrow forenoon.

2. I have lost a good deal of labour by having begun upon an article from Schiller, prefaced by a view of Schiller's character, &c., which by mere accident Gillies informed me had been already published in an early number of the Magazine. It was the story of Christian Wolf.

3. You remember something about Saturday and Monday? So Gillies tells me. Now, my remembrance is this: *De Q.* Pray, Mr Blackwood, am I in time if I send you some sheets of letter-paper down to Saturday? *Mr B.* Oh, never mind about the time. Send them then; or if not then, on Monday morning.

The most punctilious, the most regular, the most formal of men, always ready to an hour, guilty of no irregularity, only too rigid in his adherence to every point of exactitude: this is the conclusion to be drawn from these epistles. It need scarcely be said that in every particular De Quincey was the reverse of all these things.

The next letter we shall quote is of a date much later than these, and is concerned with a volume of tales which De Quincey had in preparation, and for which again he anxiously inquires at what date it must be put in the publisher's hands. Again he has been detained, this time by "dreadful illness in my family, Mrs De Quincey having been at the point of death from Jaundice, and one of my children from Erysipelas." He discusses with his usual elaborate detail the question of date, the possibility of running to two volumes instead of one, the expediency of printing his book under his *nom de guerre* as the English Opium-

eater. This letter is written from Grasmere on March 3, 1830 :—

T. De Quincey to W. Blackwood.

I should wish if it were possible to be anonymous for this first *début*—that is, anonymous on the title-page; for otherwise it would be easy to you, with your command of all avenues to the public ear, to make the authorship effectually known, though not so formally as by this distinct acknowledgment on the title. Do not suppose that I am underwriting myself. I neither ever did, nor do I think I could, underwrite myself on any subject whatever; for in order to write at all, I find it necessary to create for myself a real interest in my theme. Neither, again, have I any nervous tremors connected with the act of appearing before the public. But simply on politic considerations, looking forward to the possibility that I might not realise the whole of what was expected from me, it seems prudent in a first attempt—first I mean in this department of literature—to provide the means of retreat by coming forward in a masque.

My 'Canterbury Tales' finished, I have several papers in a state of forwardness for 'Maga,' which I am inclined to think will suit you. In particular—

1. One on the flight of the Calmuck Tâtars from Russia to the frontier of China.

2. One on the celebrated work (if a work so little known, and of which only two copies are said to survive, can properly be called so) of Giordano Bruno, called 'Spaccio della Bestia Triomfante.' A copy which occurred in an auction in Queen Anne's time, and drew public attention by the price which it fetched (viz., £50), is noted by Steele (as perhaps you may remember) in No. 389 of the 'Spectator,' but with great inaccuracy. I have Dr Farmer's transcript of that copy which exists in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge. I am also rich in other works of Giord. Bruno, bought at the Roxburgh sale in 1812, and have really read the books, which all the German Historians of Philosophy (Buhle, Termenon, and others) are compelled to sigh for as jewels unattainable even by princes.

3. A miscellaneous paper of remarkable literary notices, something of the nature of Ana, but more select than Ana usually are.

Further, I wish much to commence upon the Orators; and also, a thing I mentioned to Prof. Wilson, I have matter for a pointed article on the History of Logic, in connection with Whately's book. But for that purpose I should need two books—viz., Whately's and Reid's 'Anal. of the Organon of Aristotle,' furnished originally to Lord Kames—for one part of his Sketches, and reprinted (as no doubt you remember) by one of our Fathers in the Row, Μακρόχειρ, I think—*i.e.*, Longimanus, as Coleridge used to call him. On the whole, you may rely upon me during next summer as a really active contributor.

I hear (but living very much alone all this winter I cannot say that I know it of my own knowledge) that 'Maga' has of late been thundering and lightening with more splendour than ever. Four recent numbers, but not the very latest, I had a momentary peep into last week. In one of these I saw a very good review of the Family Library; and much I wish that the eloquent writer would fulfil his engagement and trace the melancholy record of that ruinous torpor and inaction which too justly he charges upon the Tories. One memorable instance well illustrating his general thesis — that the Tories never step forward in any career but when forced into it by the Whigs—he has overlooked: that, I mean, of Bell and Lancaster. Bell, it was true, was first, and he was even slenderly patronised (zealously, perhaps, for the degree, but slenderly for the number); yet when was it taken up as a national affair? Then, first, when Lancaster had stolen his plan, and the Whigs, the Malcontents of every class, had adopted Lancaster into their train of artillery. And but for this hostile movement, would the Tories ever have looked aside at Bell? I think not. Your reviewer's illustration from the cases of the 'Edinburgh' and 'Quarterly' Reviews, from the two London Universities, and from the cheap bodies of popular literature, all speak the same melancholy language. I doubt, indeed, whether there has been one exception, beyond that of your own journal. You unquestionably had no precedent, though you have since had so

many followers. And everybody must envy you the proud recollection of having not only established but raised to its present supremacy, without guide or example, so potent an engine for working on the national mind, and also of having achieved this triumph in a region where, of all others in the empire, your journal had the least possible toleration to expect. Other journals in other countries have had to fight in a minority; but in your case, and speaking of Tory principles, &c., I apprehend that even a minority did not exist in Edinburgh (that is, not in an avowed shape) until your journal either half created or half gave it courage to declare itself.

Hence, by the way, the misplaced hauteur of Southey in his dialogues with Sir T. M., if in the contemptuous terms applied to magazines, &c., he had any eye to yours. I drew the attention of Prof. W. to this last 'Quarterly,' and I see that he has noted it a little since then; but surely not with the requisite severity. Perhaps he forbore out of consideration for Lockhart, or perhaps even for Southey himself. Else, to speak in Jonathan's phrase, surely it is an "almighty" absurdity for a writer in the 'Quarterly Review' to conceit himself as standing upon higher ground than one in 'Blackwood's Magazine.' The one, with every allowance for its talent and knowledge (though often God He knows, ponderous as nightmare), notoriously owed much, everything almost, to the name and *prestige* of the aristocracy, which from its earliest appearance gave it countenance and support. It was a pet child of the family. The other made its way as a foundling or an adventurer would, and by mere absolute weight of power, not counting upon favour, but trampling upon opposition. In a question, therefore, of native strength, and abstracting from it everything adventitious, the contest is almost absurd, and Mr Southey's conceit most ludicrously misplaced.

I fear I am prosing: however, I do not prose often in the epistolary way.

In the following letter we can less excuse De Quincey for prosing: here he has fallen back into excuses and explanations, and a setting forth of still more exquisite and pathetic reasons, not only for

delay, but for despair, which are extremely characteristic of the man :—

T. De Quincey to W. Blackwood.

Nov. 20, *Saturday Morning*, 5 *o'clock.*

I am conscious that I do not stand in any very favourable position for any request of any kind, as the writer of an article still unfinished; and I have but little time indeed to state the case, and lastly, I am not even sure that it will be of any use to me to succeed under circumstances apparently so hopeless. But, however, considering that any delay at this moment will bring two days more of delay (to-morrow being Sunday), and also having some wish to discharge to the letter a promise that I made some days ago, though holding out but little benefit to anybody, I shall explain my situation briefly before I go for a few hours to bed. Some days ago (and to that circumstance almost entirely, though in a very small degree to the sudden derangement of my plan by the resignation of Ministers, you must ascribe my backwardness in my article) I received a letter from my wife. . . . Now, if you inquire what there is distressing in her situation, I answer not much, beyond what is purely imaginary. The main grievance I suppose to be this: the person at whose house she and her children have lodgings —a woman, and apparently coarse-minded and vulgar — has children of her own. Disputes, such as occasionally arise among children, have, I suppose, arisen. The mistress of the house has taken part, as people of that rank, you know, always do, with her own children—wrong or right. My servants, on the other hand, have taken part with my children—no doubt also whether wrong or right. I fear ill-blood; and the woman, having no other means of expressing her spite, and no doubt expecting that her arrears cannot be paid on demand (though in fact not much is due), has grown insolent, and perhaps has said things that make it painful to continue in her house; and unfortunately there happens to be no other in that neighbourhood where lodgings can be obtained. Such, according to my impression collected from my Wife's letters, is the extent of the evil. To combat her views and intentions I have for the last three days—Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, precisely the

three days on which my political article claimed my most undivided attention—been obliged to diminish the remaining time, so precious as it had become, by writing long and elaborate letters suggesting remedies upon each particular grievance which she stated, and endeavouring to tranquillise her mind. By this direct abstraction of time I have been thrown back greatly in my article, and still more by the anxious and corroding thoughts and suffering state of mind under which I have written.

Hence I have still not arrived at the end of my paper. Now, under a full persuasion that I should have reached that point by Friday night at latest, I assured her in my letters of Tuesday and Wednesday that upon Saturday morning I would call upon you and state so much of the case as would obtain from you whatever the paper might seem to warrant. Not that any sum that in any reason you could give for a better paper than this would meet the demands of the case; but I promised myself that it would enable her to pause a little until I could write to my mother, which I resolved to do without delay as soon as my 'Maga' duty was over. Meanwhile, in my letter of to-morrow night I shall briefly mention my intention, and my certainty of receiving as much as she wants from that quarter within a week; and it would have been very agreeable to me if I could so far have kept my former promise as to send at the same time some small sum to meet the most pressing of her immediate occasions, though I am aware how small a one it is that an article can really merit which has been written in so hurried and distracted a way. In this manner I should at least know that I have omitted nothing in my power.

This letter evidently elicited a favourable reply. It is curious to touch and smooth out the old-fashioned cumbrous sheet, black outside with dust, faded in ink, and full of the passionate perturbation, the anxieties so long over and done, the trouble and strain of the gifted mind and delicate nervous hand formed for better things, which, as one care after another arose and fell, however he was inspired when

he wrote articles, framed his appeals for aid with such skilled and accustomed yet quivering and strange reality. The articles are buried and done with, with all their fine diction and elaborate exactitude of style. But still the man's nerves tingle and his bosom swells in these scraps of worn paper. The fact that we weary at last of the carefully compiled appeals and petitions does not lessen the sensation of their absolute reality, and the throbbing life of which their pages is so full. De Quincey is as usual confident that such a state of things can "never recur":—

I have to thank you greatly for the very liberal manner in which you thought proper to overpay my exertions on this occasion, and for the allowance you made for the agitated state of feeling in which I was placed by sudden circumstances—more especially as you made this allowance at the very moment when you were suffering from the heavy anxieties and the pressure of extra expenses which my delay, however involuntary on my part, had caused. Such a state of things, it is satisfactory to know, never *can* recur. . . . And, by the way, let me add to my account of the tremendous hindrances in these moments—that over and above the suspense and agitation such as I have already described to you, on every night of that important week I had to write a very long letter equal to 2½ pp. of 'Maga'; so that the mere drain of time, had everything else been favourable, was simply sufficient to have ruined my progress. However, this I need not dwell on. Such a case cannot recur; and against any lighter case of distress I am amply secured by gratitude.

Alas for poor De Quincey! his systematic promises, his certainties that after this one crisis is safely tided over nothing else of the kind can ever recur, his tremendous agitations and still more tremendous letter-writing, page after page in his small close handwriting, always elaborate in style, always con-

veying another and another episode of the self-same story — never ended till his life did. His strange being, so obscured by wilful mysteries, so swept by agitations and despairs, fluttered along its devious course, always falling into the same pitfalls, always pledging the same vows. It is not for a member of the same fraternity — than which there is no trade more tempted to transgress the rules of prudence and believe in its full force of labour that to-morrow will be as to-day, if not more abundant—to throw the first stone at him. In these days there was scarcely an individual in the literary profession who did not transgress these rules and presume more or less upon that power of evolving a living, not to say many things fairer than mere living and more exhilarating, out of nothing. We begin to be prudent now, it is said, and to understand that the fairy gold, like other gold, must be laid up in garners and put to vulgar interest if we are to have peace in our minds. But in former days nobody had as yet put forth that doctrine except as a theory. Our excellent friend Anthony Trollope may be said, we think, to be the founder of literature, or rather of fiction, as a serious profession, followed so many hours every day, and bringing in so much steady income. Before that there was always more or less of a happy chance in the rewards of authorship, —Scott himself being so much of the order of the miraculous, and his pecuniary successes, though so great, yet small in comparison with his fame, that no one could count upon him as a precedent: not to say that the high and lofty presumption in the public mind concerning the author, that (notwithstanding all the hungry traditions of Grub Street) he was a being

actuated by much higher motives than money, had not yet entirely died away. Mr Blackwood himself, though he must have had many experiences to the contrary to damp the ardour of his belief, never ceased to hold this view. The sentiments which he held on this subject, written I do not remember to what correspondent, are very strongly expressed: "I never did, and never will, hold out money in itself as the inducement for men of talents to write for 'Maga.' What I have always been anxious for, is that able men should write on such subjects as they themselves felt an interest in, and," we must allow he adds at once, "never to print any article without paying liberally for it." Without that sequence, the first portion of the aphorism might perhaps have fallen a little blank on literary ears: yet surely there was more real respect for Literature in this manner of treating it, even when semi-fictitious, than is implied in the present mode of bargaining for it as a mere commercial produce to be sold across the counter in little half-ounce packets of a thousand words each? Why, indeed, it may be asked, should it be considered a different kind of commodity from salt or sugar? But, except in so far as it sweetened or gave zest to life, nobody thought of Literature in those days as another species of the *Denrées Coloniales* or *Delicatessen* of the shops; and the price "per thou." of words was not quotable in any price list, though we don't doubt it shortly will be now.

De Quincey, however, went on for many years in a long succession of complaints, explanations, misunderstandings, and thanksgivings, all mingled and ever recurring, notwithstanding his conviction every time

that they never could recur. The following will show that, through all the experience of a dozen years, he never got any assurance as to what was, as we should say now, "the last day" on which he could send in his "copy." That slang was happily little used, if indeed it was invented, in De Quincey's day.

T. De Quincey to W. Blackwood.

Tuesday morning.

It would be idle to deny that your note gave me great pain: much from the immediate disappointment; but more by a good deal from the alarming prospect opened to me in two expressions—supposing that I understood them rightly. But it is very possible that I may *not* do so. And at any rate I am sure you will be glad, by a word or two of explanation, to prevent any future misapprehension on points of so much importance at this moment.

1. From one expression, if I do not take it in a wider meaning than you designed, I collect—that the payment of articles is to be contingent (as regards the *time*) upon the time of publication; for you say as a reason (if I understand you) for delaying payment,—that "it has not been in my power to make use of any portion of it." Now the rule hitherto laid down (and acted upon) by yourself has been—that this non-use was not to affect the payment, unless it arose by some neglect of mine in putting the article into a state for publication. And formerly, as well in conversations as in letters, both yourself and Prof. Wilson have been used to complain of my inquiring about the time of publication—as a matter in which I could have no personal interest. Am I to understand that this rule is changed?

2. You speak of yourself as being "not a little pressed for money." Now of course it is not my purpose to inquire in the remotest way into your affairs; but do you wish me to understand that, for the present, other demands upon yourself make it needless for me to exert myself in writing? And, if so, for how long a time do you wish me to understand that restriction as operating?

I need scarcely say to anybody, acquainted in the most general way with my situation, that any prospects, which are remote ones, are really *quoad me* none at all. For about a period of 3 months, two accidents have occurred to prevent my pressing much upon you. These were, 1st, that the *Cæsars* required so much previous reading (40 pages to ascertain that there was not anything to notice, for 1 that produced what was) —that these 3 sheets occupied me *at least* 7 weeks, and the rest of my time till lately was pretty fully taken up with correspondence. . . .

These cases I mention merely to illustrate the nature of the necessities pressing upon me, and the absolute impossibility of my evading the demands, or of continuing to write under any uncertainty about the time of payment; and upon these cases, as sufficiently explaining the necessity, I found this question—May I count upon the money for a sheet, or even for $\frac{3}{4}$ of a sheet, on Monday, the 30th, if I put a 3*rd* paper of the *Cæsars* into your hands on Sunday? And upon the general case I have stated I found also a general question, whether, with my necessities as I have stated them, it will be of any use for me to stay in Edinburgh? You will very much misunderstand me if you should suppose that I shall complain if you answer *No;* or that I write in any spirit of complaint. I can readily believe that the demands upon you are enormous and incessant. Nor shall I feel the least vexation on being told that no more of my articles are or will be wanted. I shall regret only that I had not earlier known of this, and in time to have reserved from the last remittance I had, so much as would suffice to place me in London. Perhaps, however, you may be willing to receive my MS. up to a certain quantity. At any rate, in a matter of so much urgency and peril, I am sure that you, on your part, will not complain that I seek for certainty; nor if such a result should happen, that I have then first listened to old and repeated offers from London—when it became certain that my articles could not be taken by yourself in the extent required by my debts.

P.S.—Dr Chalmers, fortunately, I have not yet spent much time or labour of thought upon. And I have heard that the 'Westminster' has squeezed that orange. But as to Dr Christi-

son, misled by Professor W., who assured me positively that you wanted a paper on that subject, I have investigated the subject at length—in fact, I had formerly bought 2 or 3 guineas' worth of foreign books on this matter — and have recently spent a fortnight in reading and writing on it. However, I have laid aside my lucubrations since your note arrived. Goethe, unfortunately, I have not.

From the urgency of the case, I am persuaded you will favour me with an answer as soon as your convenience will allow. Meantime I shall be working on the *Cæsars*, in the hope that it will avail for the time and purpose mentioned.

I would not detain your messenger, and therefore did not write an answer. I now send you all of one article except what I will send in the morning. I know not whether I have disappointed you: I cannot help daily disappointing myself; but this I know and can assure you, that in my whole life I never did work half so hard; that I have allowed myself time for neither sleep nor eating (at this moment I have not breakfasted); and that I am worn out beyond all I can describe. One single half-sheet of the article cost me 14 hours. This I mention only to account for my delay.

This is a humorous article, and I think the latter part will be found diverting enough. But the first sheet reads very dull to me: however, it is too late to mend it now, and besides I have no power left to judge of anything till I have had some refreshment.

6 *o'clock.*

I will correct what remains to-night, and finish another article to-morrow, which suits me better.

The following scraps have more reference to the literature which he was producing laboriously page by page, than to the instalments of money by which its production was brokenly accompanied, a fact which the publishers so badgered by elaborate questioning must have been thankful for :—

The necessity of reducing my superabundant matter, which

had crept into $3\frac{1}{4}$ sheets, has occupied me so much with cancelling and rewriting—and the verification of many points which are differently stated by different authors has so much added to my labour, that although working early and late I have not yet brought my paper into a complete state, and I fear that it will not be before Friday (day after to-morrow) that I shall be able to call upon you with the paper in a state of absolute completion. This I write to-day for fear that you might suppose that I had laid aside my intention or postponed it indefinitely. Next week I propose, *Te annuente*, to complete my Paper on Ancient Oratory, upon which I have been so long at work—that is, I shall recommence next week: but as the specimens require unusual polish, coming from one expressly condemning the style of all previous translators, I fear that I shall not have finished to my own mind before the end of the month.

We were all much obliged to you for the present of the late numbers of 'Maga.' I and every member of the family read with concern that Tom Cringle has made his bow to the public. I have no guess who he is: this much only I think I have perceived—viz., that he is a Scotsman: but be he who or what he may, I admire him greatly. In some of his sketches he has the mingled powers of Salvator Rosa and of Hogarth: so at least it strikes me.

Last night I returned to you about 10 o'clock the manuscript of the Gordon article, upon which I wish to make a short explanation. The first thing I did after receiving back the MS. was carefully to read over the whole, pen in hand. My purpose was to have struck out everything which seemed not indispensable to the narrative. But I assure you that having totally forgotten the article, and reading it therefore as an entirely new and unknown tale, I was more deeply interested in the whole succession of events than ever I was in any war whatsoever: a fact which I am far from ascribing to any merit on my part, but simply to the exceedingly romantic and scenical character of the leading incidents, which could not have been narrated by anybody in so condensed a form without offering the interest of a novel. Under these circumstances I could not devise any material suppressions which would not have

been *pro tanto* mutilations: as omitting something on the very same scale of importance as all that was retained. And one part which I had specially projected to strike out—viz., the sketch of the Ottoman power in its growth and its decay—turned out to be too inconsiderable in extent to offer any compensating benefit for the injury which its removal would do to the completeness and *orbicularity* of the proportions: at all events this seemed the one sole section of the article which could be cancelled without absolutely dissolving the whole Paper. Except, therefore, as regards very numerous corrections, I confined my alterations to such completions and filling in of lacunæ as the case demanded. It is true that the Paper will thus extend to 3 distinct articles; but considering that it is a history of a Revolution now completed, and of a war incapable of renewal, I should presume that few readers would complain on that score; whilst the constant references to Mr Gordon's opinions, and even to his very words, will necessarily have the effect of keeping him and his book before the public.

I have now to thank you for sending in advance a £5 note, and to set myself right upon a point in my last letter which you have misunderstood. I did not at all mean to say that it could make no difference to you what time you made any particular pecuniary settlement with me, for I am aware that the most extensive concerns have their periods of depression and embarrassments; but that I presumed that an hour later or earlier might have been a matter of indifference to you, whilst from the peculiar circumstances I was then stating, even such a difference might to me happen to be a matter of importance.

De Quincey, always an irregular contributor, ceased his connection with Blackwood several years before his death. But some of his finest pieces of composition appeared in the Magazine, and his genius and the beauty of his style were never more highly appreciated than by its conductors and supporters. It has always been a matter both of pleasure and pride to preserve his name in the roll of those whose tradition and legend are the glory of the house.

CHAPTER X.

JOHN GALT—JOHN WILSON CROKER.

GALT THE FOUNDER OF A DISTINCT SCHOOL—HIS APPEARANCE HAILED BY THE PUBLISHER—CROKER'S SENSIBLE CRITICISM—ENCOURAGING LETTERS—POPULARITY OF THE 'ANNALS'—A HUMBLE AUTHOR—THE 'LAST OF THE LAIRDS'—A SCOTCH DEFOE—MOMENTARY INDIGNATION—LIFE IN CANADA—'RINGAN GALHAIZE'—FADING HEALTH AND LITERARY POWERS—THE 'BOROUGH'—A DISAPPOINTED CONTRIBUTOR—CROKER CRITICISES 'MAGA'—HIS EULOGY OF GALT—A CANDID FRIEND.

PERHAPS the next contributor of importance, at least in the early days of the Magazine, was one whose great temporary reputation, very real while it lasted, fell for a long time into oblivion,—but is, we hope, rising again into a modest revival, to which the pretty and popular new edition of his works has lent an impulse. This was John Galt, a man of very different character from those sons of genius, with all their irregularities and occasional follies, whom we have already dealt with. Galt was very much more the sober type of the professional man of letters than any one of that light-hearted band who stumbled into literature as the best way of giving utterance to the boundless high spirits and superabundant power of utterance that was in them, without, to begin with, any serious thought whatever, either of what they

had to say or of the consequences of saying it. Galt, with his curious, limited, but very remarkable talent, had always a serious purpose before him, and worked soberly for such modest fame as might be procurable, and the more substantial reward which helped him forward through the mingled course of his career—a little reputation which often helped him, and money which was of still greater use. His works were the first of their kind, and have been the model of all those successive works—always curiously popular in England as well as in Scotland, for it is difficult to tell what reason—which have expounded so often, and notably in our own day, the life from within of the Scottish peasant, with its humours and sagacities and roughnesses. We do not compare any of the recent exponents of the native farmer, clodhopper, or shepherd, from his own point of view, with Scott: but we do compare them with Galt, although with reservations, seeing that he is their originator and the chief of their tribe. It was not, however, the Scottish peasant with whom he was chiefly concerned. It was with the middle class, the smaller order of lairds, the rural clergy, the country writers and civic dignitaries, most of them with certain pretensions to gentility, but all with those views—original by force of their extreme limitation, and the quaint incomprehension which mingled with their native judgment—with which an intelligence trained in a village looks out upon the bigger world. The 'Annals of the Parish,' the 'Ayrshire Legatees,' and the others, were so true to fact as well as—perhaps more than—to nature, that even readers least acquainted with the class were attracted by the evident truth of the

portrait. It was not a refined portrait, nor did it leave much room for those higher qualities which the poet finds in every class and under whatsoever mantle of commonplace his subjects may be disguised; but as to the outside veracity there could be no doubt at all: the picture *was* the thing it represented.

To so enthusiastic a lover of literature as Mr Blackwood, and one at the same time so patriotic and full of that love of his native country in all her manifestations which sometimes leads the Scot astray and confuses his judgment, Galt was at his beginning like the springing up of the most refreshing of fountains. I am disposed to think that our excellent Founder would at any time have given all his goods and something to boot could he but have discovered another Scott among the many literary aspirants that crowded round him: and that he had all his life through a secret hope of this, an expectation so eager that it seemed almost impossible it should not be gratified. From the bitter moment when he lost Scott, after the brief enjoyment of that glory of being the publisher of a Waverley Novel, which turned every head in "the Trade,"—Murray in London, though already triumphant in the splendour of Byron, as well as Blackwood in Edinburgh,—I think I can see through his welcome of every new writer this glimmer of hope in his eyes. He was too able a critic not to find out, after a very brief trial, that his hope was not to be realised—a critic in spite of himself and in spite of the many sadly disappointed candidates for favour, who were sometimes elated to the seventh heaven by his cordial applauses, only, alas! to find out when the first freshness of their

inspiration was over that the too clear-sighted publisher had very soon weighed and found them wanting. I do not think that after the first step of the 'Annals of a Parish' this flattering idea continued to exist in respect to Galt; and the correspondence between him and Mr Blackwood was not of the exciting character of the others we have quoted. Here one sober man of business on the one side is balanced by an almost more sober man of business on the other, a man who makes no flights and is carried away by no enthusiasms, as Mr Blackwood frequently was, but discusses his business calmly without any dangerous *amour propre*, declaring with every appearance of sincerity that he was not himself able to discriminate between his writings as to which was bad or good, or which was better or best: and accepting the judgment of his friend with a magnanimity not always to be found among literary men. Mr Blackwood himself describes the mutual position of the two friends in a letter to Mr Croker, in sending him copies of the 'Annals' and the 'Legatees':—

W. Blackwood to J. Wilson Croker.

I feel more than merely a publisher's interest in these books: for the revisal and correction of them my friend the author has left entirely to myself. The 'Legatees' he corrected from the Magazine sheets; but the MS. of the 'Annals' I went entirely over, and I think that by omissions and a good many little alterations it is now a much more perfect and simply natural work than when it was first put into my hands.

Croker, by no means a genial critic, replied graciously to this recommendation. He had been most uncompromising in his contempt, whether of this or a similar publication does not appear, tartly assuring the pub-

lisher that "I cannot understand a word of it, neither can some Scotch friends to whom I have committed it, and therefore I judge it to be unintelligible." But a week later he had quite changed his opinion :—

J. Wilson Croker to W. Blackwood.

They are both very good, and the author, whoever he may be, has humour, pathos, and a strong feeling of the natural. Of course he does not expect to be considered another Scott; but it may be said (without a pun) that he is Scottish. His characters of public men show that he does not know much of them. He makes some little blunders as to the state of the higher society in this town.

This criticism, which appears to us very just, was probably felt as a very unkind cut by poor Galt, for he was in London too, and on the verge of official society, by reason of a position he held in Colonial, especially Canadian, affairs; and from his experiences in town he ventured to introduce another of his heroes, Sir Andrew Wylie, into very fine company indeed, and made him instrumental in clearing up several imbroglios of the most delicate character in the highest circles. 'Sir Andrew' was by no means equal to the previous works; but in its absurdity it was a most cheerful story, teaching that always popular sentiment that a good heart and a simple mind are invariably triumphant both in advancing themselves and doing good to others: which unhappily is not so easily the case even in fiction as the cheerful optimist believes—or used to believe. Indeed, though we are aware that it is not to be compared with its predecessors, we confess to a great kindness for Sir Andrew Wylie and the easy success of every sensible and benevolent project in his hands. Mr Galt's good people had all a marvellous fund of

good sense and good feeling; and it was an abominable slander on the part of Mr Croker to say that the Scotch was unintelligible. It was usually (except when a peasant of the rudest order was speaking) fine old-fashioned Scotch, the Scotch of the old ministers and the old ladies, full of idiom and curious construction, not dialect at all.

Mr Blackwood's opinion of these early works was expressed with his usual warm and genial enthusiasm, accompanied by many advices and encouragements to go on, in working the vein of pure metal which had thus been struck, for 'Maga's' advantage and Galt's own:—

W. Blackwood to John Galt.

23 *May* 1820.

Our friend Christopher desires me to express his great regret at being obliged to defer your admirable article "The Pringle Family"[1] till next month. This month was pretty early made up, and your packet did not reach me, unfortunately, till the 12th, which in ordinary cases would have been early enough; but the whole of what precedes the "Luctus Donelly" was printed off, and the "Luctus" extended further than was expected, which with Wordsworth's new volume (the interest of which would have been lost by anticipation in other journals) completely filled the Magazine. Your article was all in type, ready to have been inserted had there been room for it. I now send you the slips, which you will be so good as return corrected by Messrs Cadell & Davies' parcel, which is despatched on the 31st. I hope along with these you will be able to send the continuation, which I am most anxious to see. It is, I think, a most happy subject you have taken in hand, and you have executed it with wonderful spirited interest. The characters are quite graphic, and you have a glorious field to act upon. In fact, I hope you will continue the series for such a length

[1] Ayrshire Legatees.

of time as will enable you to embrace all the subjects which would interest such visitors of London, and will of course interest every one.

W. Blackwood to John Galt.

EDIN., 25 *April* 1821.

I am glad you are getting on with the other work. I am quite certain that if you take time, and put your whole strength upon it, you will make a most amusing and interesting book. A great matter is to construct a good and striking story with which to interweave your graphic sketches of actual life and manners. Perhaps it would attract attention to it if part were published first in the Magazine. But this we can judge better of when you are nearly finished and can send me the MSS.

W. Blackwood to John Galt.

EDIN., 20 *May* 1821.

About ten days ago Mr Cadell wrote me that the 'Annals' were very popular, and were selling well. You would see the very favourable critique in the 'Guardian,' and the paragraph in last 'John Bull' saying it was a work of great genius, and would be reviewed in the 'Journal of Literature' published yesterday. I wrote you how much the book was liked here; and its fame, I assure you, is not decreasing. My friend, the Professor, says "it is not a book, but a fact." The Man of Feeling sounds its praises everywhere, and has actually given me a critique upon it, which appears in this number of the Magazine. This, however, you must not mention to any one, as the old gentleman is very chary about his name. . . .

I am quite delighted with the idea of Provost Hoolie. It is a glorious subject, and I intended to have written you to suggest the idea of a citizen's chronicle, as the changes, &c., in a town have been so striking during the last fifty or sixty years. . . .

You may rest assured that I will give you more for this volume than I did for the 'Annals.' For my sake take time and put forth your whole strength upon it, and I will make it worth your while. I am truly happy at the prospect of having the pleasure of seeing you so soon. At meeting we will arrange all this, and talk over fifty other things.

I do hope and trust that we will always be completely satis-

fied with each other, as nothing can give me so much pleasure as being able to act liberally towards you. I thought I had mentioned before that I would make you an additional allowance for 'Legatees.' If I have not, it has escaped merely from having always been in my mind as a matter of course.

25 *June* 1821.

I am not surprised at Bonaparte's agent taking the 'Annals' for a credible history, for even here some people have viewed them in the same light. Among the others, my worthy old mother read the book with great delight, and thought Micah an honest and upright minister of the Gospel. But, unfortunately, one of my little boys told her it was a novel, and thus it lost all its charms, and she was very angry with us for having deceived her.

Mr Galt, however, does not seem to have stood very much in need of encouragement: his opinion of himself was modest but not insufficient.

John Galt to W. Blackwood.

30 *Jan.* '22.

It is one of my literary misfortunes that I cannot get friends to read my MSS. Even Mrs G. pronounces them illegible. I am therefore obliged to read scraps here and there, which do not serve to convey any proper outline of the general story. Were I to get sufficient encouragement, I think I could write a novel on the progress of a Scotchman in London, embracing all varieties of metropolitan life, that would assuredly take. For although the 'Legatees' is apparently my first Scottish work, the fact is that the Pastor was begun many years ago, and before 'Waverley' appeared I wrote to Constable proposing to execute a Scottish story. It is also a curious coincidence that long before the appearance of the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel,' I, then very young, in sending some trifle to the 'Scots Magazine,' mentioned my design of executing a series of historical ballads and dramas from Scottish history. What a cursed fellow that Walter Scot [*sic*] has been, to drive me out of my old original line!

Let us hope that Galt spoke in jest, and did not

imagine that his "original line" would have led him to such heights as those on which Scott forestalled him; but he was something of a dull man notwithstanding his gifts—and there is no telling. His own report of the opinions he had heard of the 'Entail' were "very gratifying":—

I had a note on Saturday from Lord Gwydyr telling me it was much talked of in Brighton, and this morning the Speaker told me he thought it very amusing. Justice Park, and he *is a judge* you will say, thinks it the best of my works: he speaks, however, only of the characters. Our friend Stevenson, like you and Hamilton, still prefers the 'Annals,' but chiefly I think because they are written in the first person. Thomson considers it far the best thing I have done, and showing power above anything in my former sketches. Dr Tilloch also speaks well of it, but I have not seen him; and divers ladies and booksellers speak very favourably.

Brighton was the favourite resort of the king in those days: hence Galt's intention of dealing with Christopher North as that ruthless jester dealt with his many victims:—

John Galt to W. Blackwood.

BRIGHTON, *January* 1823.

I shall probably have a letter from Brighton, "Christopher North at the dinner in the Pavilion to-day." The Ministers are here, and are to dine there. It will be jocular, and I will attempt to give their character and manners, with some incidental account of the splendours of the unacceptable Elysium of Paperius [?]. It will be known in this character as coming from me, but if you keep the secret it will do some good to 'Maga.' Don't let Wilson or Lockhart know I am here. The Whigs, you must know, crow not a little at the king's having, before his illness, paid them so much attention. If I continue in the humour till I have time to write, it will be *my very best thing*. The consternation in perspective is delightful.

I don't think, however, that Galt, or any other except the privileged writers who made up that fine personality, were ever allowed to magnify their own cleverness at the expense of Christopher North. No one but Maginn, whose adoption of all the habits of thought and language current among the original knot of friends was so prompt and so extraordinary, ever was admitted to disport himself in that characteristic field. And Galt had a heavy hand, quite incapable of such light yet dashing warfare. He could no more, we fear, have set Christopher upon his canvas than he could have forestalled 'Waverley.'

It was not, however, through the Pringle family and their fellows that Galt considered himself to reach his highest level. He plumed himself on his acquaintance with the "higher society" which Croker denied him any knowledge of, and into which he led his hero, Sir Andrew Wylie; and on his intimate acquaintance with public men and "the best circles." His articles on these subjects, however, did not always please the censor of Princes Street, and still less the two advisers, Wilson and Lockhart, who found the author of the 'Legatees' prosy and pompous, and put no faith in his knowledge of the world. It is curious to find that he was one of several persons who were to have been chosen to write the Life of Byron (with whom he had some personal acquaintance), which was contemplated by the executors and Mr Murray before the Autobiography was destroyed. And he had in fact much intercourse with notable personages, in the position of representative of the Canada Company, which he held at this period, and which explains his official address.

John Galt to W. Blackwood.

18 Downing Street, *Oct.* 25, 1824.

If you like I will send you a review of Medwin's book respecting Lord Byron, in which I will introduce all I meant to say in another form; but you must promise to insert it, for I do feel mortified at finding of latter days so many of my things rejected. If this subject (I mean the proposed critique) should be otherwise engaged, I will send the sketch to some other journal. At a meeting to-day the period of my return will be regulated. In the meantime, for a week or two I shall have some leisure. Write in course.

Maginn, it would appear, had been already set upon this piece of work, and he too by this time had begun to complain of articles rejected or postponed; so that there was a fine opportunity for diplomacy and Mr Blackwood's best skill to explain how in such a case it was indispensable that the younger man should give way. It is seldom, however, that Galt grumbles over this sad subject of articles rejected, though he had a great deal to bear in that way. The native humbleness with which he confesses the entire absence of any critical faculty in himself, and accepts the criticism of his friends, is pathetic:—

John Galt to W. Blackwood.

Strange as it may seem, and I really wish you would understand it, I have no knowledge whatever of any difference in the merit of my productions, so that although I have struggled against this conviction more than enough, I fairly give in. If it was not asking you to take too much trouble, I wish you would draw your pen with red ink through the strikingly objectionable passages, and return it to me when you can. If it shall then appear worthy of correction, I will do it; if not, it will be destroyed. When I say that I have no notion of one piece being better than another, I mean to say that I have no

idea in what the merit of the articles consist. I only know that I take no more pains with those that give most satisfaction than with their brethren who give none; and you will very much oblige me whenever you say that a piece does not please, for really that is a point which I never will again undertake to controvert.

Notwithstanding this confession as to his own powers in criticism, he could be critical on occasion, and does not hesitate to say (sheer blasphemy in Princes Street), "Upon the whole I do not like the number."

It is abundantly clever, but it wants substance. Rely upon it that your sale is not to be extended unless you get articles of sober *knowledge*. You have already all the range you can hope for among the fun and frolic gentry. You must aim to content another class, whom hitherto you have done little to conciliate. Mere criticism and learning will not do. You must bring something home to men's business and bosoms, or you will stand still if you do not fall back.

It was not, however, from Mr Blackwood alone that this mild member of a profession not generally held to be wanting in self-esteem received the trenchant criticism which he accepted so meekly. While he was engaged in the composition of another of his works, the 'Last of the Lairds,' he gives an account of his own docility and openness to advice, which is certainly very rare, if not unique, in the confessions of literary men:—

2nd March '26.

I have been in a state of the greatest excitement and irritation by the pressure of various public and private affairs. On Thursday last, before sending you, as I had intended, a portion of the 'Laird,' I read a part of it to a literary friend, and the effect on him made me throw the whole into the fire. This is

the second time I have done so. I am now quite persuaded that a self-told narrative will not give the effect I wish, and in consequence I am now engaged in drawing up a descriptive story, in which, though the Laird talks a great deal, the relief of description and explanation will lighten off and enliven the absurdity and weakness of his remarks and reflections. By the parcel of the 8th you will receive a few chapters of the new attempt.

I had some conversation with Alexander on Sunday about the proposed two numbers.[1] He has probably told you my opinion, which is not at this time favourable to the notion. It appears to me that men's minds run at present so on their private concerns that there is much less of literary taste than I have ever remarked before, even in the most disengaged conversations. For myself, I find a reluctance insurmountable to do anything till I have fairly settled to my own satisfaction the course of managing the Laird's biography. That once done, I shall be able to turn my attention to general topics; and as I have now more of leisure than I have had lately, it may be soon expected.

A few days later he adds the assurance that he has at last found a way out of this difficulty, which had set his mind at rest :—

John Galt to W. Blackwood.

After more cogitation than I ever bestowed on any subject, I have at last hit upon what I think and hope will have some novelty in the method of telling such a story as the Laird's. With this you will receive two chapters which I am desirous of seeing set up. By writing in my own character I shall be able to introduce with ten times more effect than I could possibly do in the Laird's language those incidents of pathos that of necessity evolve themselves out of the progress of his

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[1] This heroic expedient for getting rid of a superabundance of matter seems to have been very pleasant to Mr Blackwood's fancy, and it had proved successful, but was not perhaps an experiment to be tried too often.

story. I mean such as rouping[1] out of a family and other things connected with it, by which the *dénouement* is to be brought about. Tell me, however, frankly how you like these. I am in expectation that the story will be *at least* as graphic as anything I have ever done.

Having thus wrought himself up into some satisfaction with his work, Galt goes on to analyse it with more complacency than he usually displays. "I know not how the work may turn out," he says; "but if success be taking pains, it has cost me more than anything I have yet written. The style, however, will be quainter and richer both in allusions and imagery."

I am not quite sure about your objections to the dead Laird, though the picture will bear retouching and some amplification. It is impossible to delineate a character in which there *ought* to be coarseness as well as want of feeling without showing instances of both. If there is any merit in any of my sketches, it is in the truth of the metaphysical anatomy of the characters, which though at first felt as faults in the author and thought coarse, I have seen have in the end been seen in their true light.

Unfortunately, however, Mr Blackwood did not like much the results of this remoulding, and Galt for once rises indignant in defence of the child of his imagination. It is almost the only point in the correspondence at which he shows the defensive attitude which we have hitherto found so common :—

23rd August 1826.

You will excuse me for remarking that I have been somewhat surprised at your letter. I know that it hath proceeded from your anxiety and friendship. The plan of the Laird was

[1] Selling off by auction.

finished before the writing was commenced. The object and purpose of the plan were to exhibit the actual manners which about twenty-five years ago did belong to a class of persons and their compeers in Scotland—the west of it—who are now extinct. The Laird himself is but one of the group; and I should as soon expect to see a painter make a historical picture with one figure, as an author to tell a story with one character. In one word, my good friend, I should have thought by this time that you must have known that nobody can help an author with the conception of a character nor in the evolutions of a story; detached passages and special parts may be improved by friendly suggestions, but criticism touching the vitals of what is character or plot rarely if ever improves either the one or the other. The defects of the 'Annals of the Parish' were not mine, though some of the omissions I acknowledge were judicious. 'Sir Andrew Wylie,' the most original of all I have ever done, was spoiled by your interference, and the main faults of the 'Entail' were also owing to my being over-persuaded. In one word, I would much rather throw the whole work a third time into the fire than begin to cobble any part of it on the suggestions of others. I do not know how it is, but I cannot proceed if I am interfered with. I know it is very silly to be so chary, but I cannot help it. It does *not* come of arrogance but of confidence in myself. I shall ever feel obliged by special suggestions, but any hints that would go to the alteration of plan or character will only vex me and render the task irksome. I write to you thus freely, both to obviate future causes of distaste in myself to anything I may hereafter undertake, and that you may not suppose I have any stronger feeling in reserve than I have expressed. . . . Now, don't be offended with my freedom.

This difference of opinion, however, goes on still through several letters. It seems to have taken much to rouse this sober Scottish Defoe, but when roused at last, he stood to his guns steadily. "I do not advert to your last letter," he says, referring to the answer to this communication, "having in point of fact not read

it. When I express a decided opinion it is of no use, I conceive, to embark in any controversy, and I have not the least wish to do so. I am quite satisfied you never intend anything unpleasant; but if a man has corns, an accidental tread may be as painful as a malicious stamp." Nevertheless he does not adhere to the salutary plan of not reading disagreeable letters, and accordingly here is one fling more :—

John Galt to W. Blackwood.

19*th Sept.* 1826.

I have read all your letter carefully and studiously. The only alteration I have made in the plan of the 'Lairds' is in making the Nabob one of the characters. My original scheme did not bring him personally forward, and although you have taken a prejudice against him, I am not the less persuaded that he is one of my best sketches. During the time I have given to the 'Lairds' I had nothing to distract me. I never was freer in all my life, and if I have failed so decidedly as you think, the fault does not lie at the door of business. My own feeling with respect to my work is that it is the first of all my writings, and that the characters are worked out with more individuality than any of my other works. With this conviction in my own mind, I cannot but deeply regret the strong terms in which you express your disappointment, and were I not persuaded so fully as I am by what I have remarked on former occasions, I should be afraid that you would not take that interest in promoting the sale which I am nevertheless satisfied you will do.

It is unfortunate that when an author is moved to such hot defence of his work, it is in most cases either a sign of some inward doubt, or at least a foreboding which justifies the adverse verdict. None of his later works had, we believe, the popularity of the earlier ones, yet they remain altogether a singular record of national character and manners: on a far lower level

than Scott,—the quite different conception of a man without force of imagination or higher poetic insight, limited to the facts he saw, yet within his sphere capable also of making other men see these facts, and worthy of attention for that inferior but not unimportant gift.

Having delivered his soul, however, in this way, Galt resumes his friendly tone.

> It is with me a rule of life [he continues] never to make a difference in a matter of business one of personal feeling, and I have too sincere a regard for you personally not to lament anything of the character of misunderstanding between us. . . . I shall omit any passage that you may object to, even after all that has passed; but the working out of character and the features of individuality are things which I cannot change. In fact, the persons come to my imagination as [actual] persons, and I could no more change their method of thinking than I could do those of any living individual.

We may add here an illustration of this book from Mr Blackwood himself:—

> EDIN., 7 *April* 1826.
>
> When I was reading the Laird's account of his school sufferings, it put me in mind of a story which Bob Miller has often told me of the way in which his High School master, Cruikshanks, who was a perfect barbarian, used to treat him. When he had got the school fairly begun to work, he used to cry up poor Miller, and say, "Come awa', Robie, my man, ye ha'na got your med'cine yet, and gif ye ha'na earned it yet, ye will very soon." He then gave poor Robie his usual quantity, a good round dozen of pawmies.

Some of these letters are sealed with the large official seal of the Canada Company, and when Galt next wrote it was from Canada, where he was performing the more practical duties of a colonist, administrator, and settler

on a sufficiently large scale. His autobiography gives in much greater detail these large public transactions, and the sowing of that seed of commerce and foundation of communities which comes to such rapid results on the other side of the Atlantic, though scarcely then with such suddenness of growth as is sometimes the case now. But the simple record of the day's work has a great reality and life:—

John Galt to W. Blackwood.

BURLINGTON BEACH, U. C., 20 *Nov.* 1827.

This will serve to let you know that I am still in the land of the living. After the most active year of my whole life, I have at last obtained a little leisure, and perhaps before the winter is over may send you something; but hitherto I have not had a day to spare from the road or the office.

I do not know that I should have written at this time, but a person of the name of Davidson, a mason, has brought me a letter from your brother, to whom I intended to say, which I think you will do for me, that he is to be employed as foreman on a house I am building for myself. When the house is finished, it will perhaps be in my power to give him a lift at my new city, which, by the way, is royally thriving. The population, Dunlop tells me, is well on to a thousand souls, and two churches are building.

Besides other journeys, I have been round Lake Huron, and fixed upon the site of another town; and in the course of a few days I have the foundations of a third to lay. The first I called Guelph, the second has been named Goderich, and the third is, at the request of a friend, to be Meldrum. Three settlements in one year, you will allow, is pretty well; but they form only a small part of my labours.

It is now settled that I am not to return, but to remain as sole superintendent with a salary of sufficient respectability, inferior only to that of the Governor. With the country I am much pleased. It opens out far finer than I had expected, and my avocations suit my disposition. But although I have as yet had no time for tales, still I look forward to comparative leisure

when I shall have organised the routine of my business, and perhaps then I may do something. What would you think of a series to be called 'The Settlers,' or 'Tales of Guelph'? The idea has come often across my mind, and the materials are both novel and abundant.

One cannot but think of the reported speech of George Eliot to a young married lady with a number of children, who had ventured into the paths of fiction with a very charming first work in the shape of a novel. The great novelist fixed a serious gaze upon the neophyte and asked, "Did you not then find enough to interest you in your family?" We are disposed to say, Was not the work of planting towns and organising a new empire, or at least a great province, enough to emancipate even a confirmed story-teller from hankering after that vocation? But indeed it does not seem to have been enough, for here we find the planter of new cities returning in his first moment of leisure to the occupation still more dear to him. And it was not even the tale of 'The Settlers,' for which there might have been many encouragements, but an old and worn-out vein of the utmost conventionality to which he turned his thoughts.

John Galt to W. Blackwood.

GUELPH, 26*th Nov.* 1828.

I have been for some time intending to request you to announce a work which I have nearly finished—not the historical notes on the Two Canadas, for that I must postpone till I have some opportunity of revisiting the Colonial Office, but a view of the world of London, under the title of 'My Landlady and her Lodgers.' I think it will be quite as good as anything I have ever done, and be a little like the 'Annals,' with more variety of incident and character. I had planned another, 'The Settlers,' intending to give a picture of the progress of a settle-

ment in this country; but the topics of the other came suddenly upon me, and have interested my leisure. The navigation being shut, I will send the MS., when I have got a fair copy completed, by the way of New York. In the meantime, you may announce it as forthcoming early in the spring.

I have now taken up my abode in this "city," in one of the finest rough log cottages probably ever raised. The portico is perfectly beautiful, being formed entirely of trunks of trees, which in effect afford really a pretty specimen of the Ionic order, thereby very clearly showing that that order is quite as truly an original one as the Doric, which is generally regarded as the only original. The house was not built at first for a private dwelling, but by a little alteration I have made it a good one; and considering its rough exterior and internal simplicity, it might almost lay claim to some pretension to elegance.

I am not sure that when I last wrote I mentioned the founding of another CITY—a seaport, Goderich—on the lovely shores of the Lake Huron. In the course of the summer, under the directions of the doctor, we began the settlement, and I opened a road through the forest, upwards of seventy miles in length, thus rendering it practicable to pass from Lake Ontario to Goderich, which is at the Red River mouth, in two days.

My business is becoming very extensive and complicated, and promises to answer the best expectation of those who founded the Company. But my own situation, though the allowance is liberal, is far from being comfortable; indeed, so little so that last year about this time I was within an ace of throwing it up, and but for an unforeseen occurrence I should by this time have been on my way to England — not, however, with the intention of resigning, but to see if I could have persuaded the Directors that to attempt to manage a concern, in which men's feelings and characters are as much objects of consideration as their bargainings, from the distance of St Helen's Place, would be found impracticable. It vexes me to see how easily my work may be done, and yet how many difficulties are created and time lost in correspondence and controversy.

He writes a few months later :—

You have heard what has happened in the Canada Company. The capital is not forthcoming, and the actual shareholders have intimated the fact to Government. Towards me there has been for upwards of twelve months the most annoying conduct, all about which you will in due time hear. About the beginning of November I intimated my intention of coming home for explanations, after having tendered my resignation, which unfortunately was withheld by the Governor of the Company, and the immediate cause of disgust softened. But the true state of money matters will show that another cause than my alleged obstinacy was working to the effect which has now taken place.

My stay in London and on this side of the Atlantic will not perhaps be longer than three or four months. I should like, therefore, to go to press at once here with 'My Landlady.' It will be about the size of the 'Lairds.' As I mentioned, it is nearly finished; but unfortunately, owing to my winding up of the Company's concerns during the last four months, I had not time to get it copied. I have also brought with me a mass of documents and notes for an account of the Upper Canadas, chiefly of the statistical kind, calculated to be useful to emigrants, and of this I intend to make a small cheap volume; but I apprehend it must be a London publication, as many of the tables and values will require a very careful revision with the vouchers in the Canada House.

With respect to the 'Landlady,' I leave the price to yourself; but under the circumstances in which the Company stands, and until my accounts are passed, I shall be as much in want of money as ever.

The next letter, written after his return home, shows not only the misfortunes that dogged his steps, but a wistful fear lest the expedient which his necessities compelled him to resort to might lose him the confidence of his steady and constant friend. The book referred to was, I believe, 'Ringan Gilhaize,' one of his least successful works.

John Galt to W. Blackwood.

LONDON, 26*th July* 1829.

I am of course much gratified to find 'My Landlady' likely to please. I shall have regularly four to five chapters to send monthly. The other part of the Canada article will be ready by the 8th.

I told you that I expected soon to have a great deal of leisure, and I am likely to have it with a vengeance. Among other specimens of the usage I have had to endure from the Canada Company was noting my bills for non-acceptance, thereby implying a doubt of my integrity. This I find has had the effect of seriously injuring me in Canada; for although all the bills as they fell due were ordered to be paid, and are now all paid by the Company, the evil to me still operates. This, with the impression that I was on the eve of returning immediately to Canada, brought every person who had any claim, direct, contingent, or indirect, upon me, so that I have been advised to take refuge in the Bench till some arrangement can be made. I do not wish this, however, to be known; but the mischief it does, to say nothing of the humiliation, is indescribable.

But what I have now to state concerns you a little. Mr Hallett had paid the premium of an insurance on my life, and not anticipating I should be put to such straits on the Company's account when I left Canada, I trusted to getting money here to pay the premiums and interest on what I owe Mr H.; but being disappointed, and being pressed for a payment, I was obliged to go to Colburn to see what he would give me on account of a novel, and as he agreed to advance me £300, I closed at once with him. I beg to assure you I was actuated only by the necessities of my unexpected situation, and I hope you will see it in that light. I could not wait until the proceeds of any property I ordered to be sold in Canada were remitted, and I was nearly persuaded by what you said that it would not have suited you to have entered into such an agreement with me. This affair I therefore trust you will consider as a business transaction, and not affecting our friendship.

Galt's life was, like that of so many literary men

in these—may we almost say in all?—days, full of increasing gloom and agitation towards the end. Says Wordsworth—

> "We poets in our youth begin in gladness;
> But thereof come in the end despondency and madness."

But to those who are not poets, and have neither the rapture nor the exaltation, but only so much of the faculty of utterance as to beguile them in their beginning with hopes of an inexhaustible fountain, the penalty of early facility and success is more sad still, with often a bathos of obstinate hope in the midst of the facts of downfall and decadence, which makes us doubtful whether to laugh or weep. Galt tried many ways of improving upon himself, but did not succeed, having in reality but one thing which he could do well, and that a thing which soon exhausted a fickle public. And his business plans were sadly unprosperous, and his health failed. He keeps, even in speaking of his illness, which seems to have been a kind of paralysis, a sober unexaggerated tone which is more pathetic than lamentation. "I have been very unwell since I wrote to you last, and am but slowly recovering my power," he writes. "My complaint is a little peculiar: it is the nerves of power, not those of sensation, that occasion my malady; and certainly when it made its first appearance five-and-twenty years ago I was then almost as bad as I have been since: but I was not so old a man, and the vigour of youth was of more efficacy. This is now the fifth fit." Nevertheless, though with this dreadful hindrance, he

went on steadily, sending by the very post which conveys (written in another hand) this sad account of his condition, an instalment of another piece of work. It is evident that Mr Blackwood had suggested to the old friend, who in the meantime had strayed far into realms unknown, that after all there was nothing like 'Maga' amid the mirages of the literary deserts:—

John Galt to W. Blackwood.

FREEMAN'S COURT, CORNHILL, 31*st July* 1832.

I beg you to accept my best thanks for the number of the Magazine. You conjecture truly when you suppose me to have a warm side to it. I certainly do feel somehow at greater ease with it than I have ever done since other engagements drew me off; for what with these and with Canadian concerns I have but little leisure, and infirm health makes me sparing of myself.

Politics I doubt are now over for a time; but I have often thought that a Deputation to London from a Borough, treated somewhat like the 'Ayrshire Legatees,' offered a new and excellent subject. If you think it will do to be carried through two-three numbers, let me know at your leisure, and I will send a portion for the next number. Much good satire, I am persuaded, may be concealed under a very seemingly sincere manner, and a story may be introduced which shall embrace a case of private interest with public virtue. Besides, one can give characters of public men that may be amusing if people are not disgusted with the subject.

This idea would seem to have been carried out in the 'Borough,' in which Galt returned with some success to his original vein, the only one in which success was possible to him. But many were the projects less legitimate and reasonable which went through the busy mind of the man thus toiling on with limbs that could no longer obey his will, and labouring

thoughts which some domestic amanuensis had to put on paper for him—but always active, with that melancholy industry which toils in vain after the triumph long since departed from its efforts. Here is one project which looks to us hopeless enough. But the time was addicted to publications of the kind, expensive steel engravings, solid sheets of ill-advised art, conjoined with rivulets of "letterpress," faintly explaining, illustrating the illustrations, whether of "Female Beauty," in the persons of real or imaginary heroines, the Countess of So-and-so, or Gulnare and Medora, which were a favourite manufacture of the age; or of scenery—the Rhine, the Danube, and so forth; or, according to the following programme, of scenes more recondite still. Martin, the painter of "Belshazzar" and of the "Last Judgment," has fallen out of the recollection of to-day, but at that period his name was still one to conjure with. Galt writes to inform Mr Blackwood that he had seen Cadell, and suggested to him that he should be the joint-publisher with Blackwood (whose acquiescence would seem to have been taken for granted) "of a joint-publication projected by me and Mr Martin (Belshazzar)," to which Cadell had readily agreed:—

John Galt to W. Blackwood.

BARN COTTAGE, OLD BROMPTON, *7th March* 1833.

The work is to be in royal 4to, and to consist of a picture by Martin and an illustrative tale by me, with an extract from the original work that has suggested it. It is to be executed in the very first style that the arts allow here, and to come out in numbers. We expect it will form an era in the arts, as the drawing and engraving are to be executed simultaneously, and the printing to be as elegant as can be procured.

After an answer, evidently somewhat discouraging, Galt writes deprecating the thought of having wished Blackwood to undertake "any advance or responsibility for the work," which, it would appear, judging by analogy and experience, had been the publisher's first thought. "I have already anticipated you in one respect," he writes, "in having matter for four of the numbers at least nearly ready, and considerably above a dozen subjects, the chief incidents in the history of the world, for Mr Martin to choose from. The work will be curious, as a picture is not wanted; the drawing and engraving on steel go together. By this means a step in art will be saved."

How this curious plan ended, I am unable to say. The idea of "subjects from the history of the world" which Mr Martin was to choose from, throws a melancholy gleam of ridicule on this new and great thing which the worn-out man of letters and the heroic or mock-heroic painter, whose tremendous efforts were so much beyond the methods of practicable or poetic art, thus plotted together. Galt had come to the point, unhappily attained so often and by so many of us in the declining days of life, when invention fails as well as popularity and success, and when he was ready to turn his hand to any subject, however completely out of his way, which promised a little occupation and revenue. He had never been a sublime figure at his best, but we cannot look at him in his failing days without a certain reverence and deeply compassionate respect. He and Hogg are the only members of the early Blackwood band who came to this too common conclusion. They both wrote their autobiographies, but Galt always under a better inspira-

tion than his less educated and more roughly bred competitor; though Hogg was indulged and cared for, with more toleration of his errors, and benevolence towards his needs, than was ever experienced by this sober and modest, if somewhat pompous, as Lockhart calls him, type of the man of literature, whose fate, when his special vein is exhausted, is often so cruel.

A little longer and we find in him the disappointed contributor, half offended, yet too anxious to recover a lost position to permit himself to be offended, who has begun to find his contributions only good to give additional work to the carrier, as Hogg says in similar circumstances :—

OLD BROMPTON, 10*th Dec.* 1833.

I wished to inquire if there was any change in the management of 'Maga,' because the character of it I think much altered. This notion, however, may be owing to my being of late greatly more by myself. I am induced to ask the question because you have returned so many MSS., some of them in part published. In fact I am puzzled, because in giving my name I thought Christopher North would have been absolved from all responsibility, and it compels me to ask if the name still is not enough to relieve you from the responsibility? I ask the question because among my papers I have found a sketch of the Seven Years' War, tending to show how the events of it gave rise to the superiority of the revolutionary doctrines, which I think would suit you: but I cannot send it at the hazard of rejection, for it would preclude me from offering it elsewhere. It would make more than a sheet.

One more word of that sympathy which, though so moderate in expression, was yet, perhaps, more complete between those two moderate and sober men than between the younger and more fiery members of the band and their guide, philosopher, friend, and

publisher—appears in the following letter of inquiry, written very near the period of Mr Blackwood's death, and addressed to one of his sons.

John Galt to Alexander Blackwood.

GREENOCK, 20 *August* 1834.

Your letter of the 16th has not relieved my anxiety about the state of your father, and I wish some of you, though you may have nothing else to say, would occasionally write me how he is. Give my best respects to him, and tell him I can sympathise truly with him, for although my disease seems to be descending into the legs, I feel no better, and my time is often spent in bed. It cannot but be some consolation to him to think that he has been the means of doing so much for the literature and, as I think, for the best system of politicks for the country.

To introduce after this hardworked man of letters and official hack, whose incessant labours brought so small a reward, the name of the Right Honourable J. Wilson Croker, the critic who disposed so summarily of his pretensions to know anything at all of that high life which the great man and the small both sought after so eagerly, seems a failure of respect to the *convenances*, and contempt of the prejudices of life. Croker was not, so far as I know, a contributor to the 'Magazine' at all, but only a constant critic, appearing very often in Mr Blackwood's correspondence, and rarely with any geniality or good-humour, though he franked letters occasionally, and never was indisposed to give good advice. We have hitherto heard, from persons interested in its progress, nothing but good of the Magazine in the point of view of brilliancy and intellectual force. Those who complained, complained of personal attacks, but never of

any want of wit. It is amusing to contrast with these the following piece of criticism from the sharp pen of the man who, being himself one of the literary celebrities of the period, has left almost the least amiable impression behind him of any writer of his time. From both sides this very important Personage in his generation has been done to death, or rather has been exhibited in all his cleverness and bitterness and officialism as a man for whom there was no milk of human kindness to spare. It was natural, perhaps, in those days when Whigs and Tories were ever at each other's throats, and even so mild and genial a man as William Blackwood spoke of his opponents as "the cursed Whigs," that Macaulay should cut to pieces in his most incisive way his political antagonist. But that the same individual should also be assailed in the house of his friends, and set up as an image of scorn in that house for the warning and edification of future generations, was a hard fate. It is, accordingly, with a sense of pleasure that we place before the reader the only sour and discontented sentence we have met with, as from the pen of Croker. He was one of those to whom Mr Blackwood had sent his cherished Magazine almost from the beginning, and it had been a great pleasure to the Edinburgh publisher to make the acquaintance of so brilliant and rising a man when he passed through Edinburgh some time before. There was great amity between them, and an occasional exchange of good offices, nor is there any sign that Mr Croker's frankness aroused feelings of resentment,—though his 'Maga' was to Mr Blackwood as the apple of his eye, and any reflection upon her much worse to him than if his own character had been assailed.

J. Wilson Croker to W. Blackwood.

ADMIRALTY, *December* 28, 1821.

You will think me very ungrateful for not having taken any notice of your monthly presents; but in spite of all my reasonable excuses for any ordinary silence, I should think myself *a monster of ingratitude* if I did not thank you for a duplicate reduplication of your kindness. I have received your 48th and 49th numbers, and am surprised at the vigour of pleasantry which you maintain. I confess your articles on the Characters of Seamen do not please me, and I hear from those who understand that delicate subject better than I do that they are rather twaddlish, and show no deep knowledge of seamen or their characters; but let that pass. On the other subjects I have only to repeat my old observation, that witty and wise and droll and dignified as they are in their several ways, *opus est haruspice nobis*, we want an interpreter. The waggery is obscure to us Southerns, and, like Persius, we cannot understand some of the best of your satire without a commentary. You in Princes Street are quite *au fait;* but I fancy, if the truth were told, there are those in the Saut Market at Glasgow who would wish for an annotator as well as we poor dolts of Charing Cross.

I have also to thank you for your 'David Lyndsay,' which I however have not read; for Murray happened to call upon me as I got the volume, and he begged leave to carry it off to compare his Cain with your Cain. To say the truth, I am a slow reader of tragedies, and if David Lyndsay be a real *bonâ fide* tragedian, I fear I shall not go deep into his book even when I get it back.

Your American Memoirs do not seem to me to deserve the praise the Editor gives them. With a few biographical notes of the persons mentioned it might have been made more interesting; but in its present state it is almost as obscure as the Standard-bearer, and much less funny,—indeed I might say not funny at all, except that here and there the vanity of the poor *Tory Jonathan* makes one smile.

I am a little anxious to see 'Sir Andrew Wylie.' The 'Annals of the Parish' and the 'Ayrshire Legatees' were not

only good, but they gave promise of greater things; and I should not be surprised, if the author will but be a little careful in what he does, and if he will not expend his vigour in dragging a Steamboat[1] against the stream, to find him acknowledged hereafter as second, and only second, to the great *Oudées* of Waverley. This I know may look like an extravagant anticipation; but there are pages in the 'Annals' and spots in the 'Legatees' which would be shining places in the 'Pirate.' If he be a young author he may scatter his wild oats about; but if he be anything like a veteran, he should husband his resources and make not more than one great effort per annum.

You generally put Mr Hook's Magazine under my cover, but by this means he never gets it till very late. He seldom calls, and still less often is willing to carry off a parcel in his fashionable pockets. He lives five miles off, and the twopenny post will not accept such voluminous packets as your Magazine. I would therefore suggest your forwarding the future numbers to him by your regular channel. His address is No 1 Kentish Town, or at least *was* when I last heard of him; but he was talking of flitting, and I believe he has been for the last three weeks with his brother at Winchester.

You will see that I have in a true spirit of trade answered your double present with a double sheet of acknowledgment.

The double sheets are gilt-edged, heavy, and of thick paper, as if to show the ostentatious freedom of a man who possessed the power of franking his letter, over the ordinary mortals who crammed one poor sheet to the point of suffocation, writing on every available morsel of space in order to avoid a second page and a double postage.

Mr Croker repeated the same sort of commentary on another occasion at less length. He says, in the very spirit of those good-natured friends who love to

[1] The voyage of a Steamboat, with the various characters and conversations thereon, was one of Galt's series in the Magazine.

let their victim know the worst that is said of him, and in the true spirit of Disraeli's caricature:—

I think the most friendly thing I can do by you is to tell you honestly what I think of your 'Magazine.' I think from the cursory view which I have taken of it that it is not so good as the last, though it is better than the former. You must endeavour to make your articles shorter and more various—more in the style of the 'Gentleman's Magazine.'

This last touch would have been insupportable if it had not been so absurd. "I shall always be glad to hear from you when you have any literary news to communicate," adds Mr Rigby, true to the wonderful portrait of him which was at that time still in young Disraeli's brain.

Though these letters are quoted simply as a pleasant alteration from the usual panegyrics of the Magazine, I may add here another note in Croker's hand, which will be interesting to those who know him better as the victim of Macaulay's review than in his own important person. It is dated 13th October 1831:—

J. Wilson Croker to W. Blackwood.

If your editor should be disposed to notice the Edinburgh review of my 'Boswell,' I enclose you some materials. If you should not think the thing worth the trouble, pray return me the notes, which you receive under separate covers. I *know* the review was concocted at Holland House, and *Murray says* by Macaulay and Atheist Allen. Many errors, much too many, I have myself made, chiefly from the bad habit of trusting to memory, and when I attain the *substance* neglecting the details. But in the more important passages I think the notes will show you that the Reviewer is not only wrong, but sometimes grossly wrong. If you print my notes, I think it would be well to print the review in one column and the answer in another: that method has an excellent effect when the answers are complete, as some of ours certainly are.

CHAPTER XI.

OTHER CONTRIBUTORS: REV. DR CROLY — CHAPLAIN-GENERAL GLEIG—THOS. DOUBLEDAY—MRS HEMANS.

A PUBLISHER WITH OPEN ARMS—'MAGA'S' CRIMPS—REV. DR CROLY—UNINTERESTING LETTERS—'SALATHIEL'—REV. DR GLEIG, CHAPLAIN-GENERAL—THE PERSONALITY OF 'MAGA'—THE 'SUBALTERN'—'LIFE OF THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'—THOMAS DOUBLEDAY, RADICAL POLITICIAN—THE QUESTION OF LIBELS—MRS HEMANS—MISS CAROLINE BOWLES—ALARIC ATTILA WATTS—A CHRONICLER OF SMALL BEER—A CRITICISM OF LAMB—ADVERTISING SCHEMES—A LITERARY CELEBRITY'S COSTLY DINNER—THE CORONATION NUMBER OF 'MAGA'—MURRAY AND BENJAMIN DISRAELI—THE ABBEY OF FONTHILL—FOUNDATION OF THE 'SPECTATOR'—CROFTON CROKER—COMPLIMENTS FROM THE ELDER D'ISRAELI—NEWSPAPER NOTES—AN EPITOME OF THE COURSE OF LIFE.

BESIDES the contributors already referred to, Mr Blackwood had a surrounding of zealous friends and correspondents, who appear behind him, a crowd of eager faces like the background of an old picture, busy as a throng of bees, productive, filling up every corner. One of the numerous jokes against him in the laughing circle that was nearest to him was, that he asked every man whom he met to contribute to the Magazine; and certainly this was true enough of all men of genius or remarkable gifts who came in his way. We have seen that he received with open arms the young man who wrote to him from Cork, giving only initials,

and had published his articles for some time before he had any idea who he was. This kind of mystery was delightful to the mood of the period, and added to the pleasure with which a new writer was received. And Blackwood had a number of agents and retainers about the world, especially in London, including the aforesaid anonymous young man from Cork, Dr Maginn, who were specially intrusted with a roving commission to find young men of parts who were capable of being turned into contributors: some of these agents, I have been told, received a small annual allowance for this, and were literary crimps, seizing hold of every likely young fellow who came by. Maginn drew a whole tribe around him out of Ireland, from the smaller fry who never came to much, up to Crofton Croker, already an author and a Member of Parliament; and almost every important member of the staff brought others in his train.

The greatest and most faithful of the contributors in the secondary rank were, without doubt, two clergymen,—the Rev. Dr Croly, and the Rev. G. R. Gleig, afterwards Chaplain-General. The contributions of both of these gentlemen were endless and of extraordinary variety: they would write on any subject at a week's or even a few days' notice, review any book, criticise any political movement, produce a story, or *en dernier ressort* furnish a few verses "to fill up a stray half page." They were not, perhaps, of the sparkling or brilliant order, like those whose performances made the reputation and founded the fortunes of the Magazine, as has been already seen; but they were most useful and able workmen, doing yeomen's service, always faithful, always ready, and gaining

much applause and a steady little thread of income, no doubt ever welcome in addition to the small revenue of the curacy or vicarage which they held, neither of them attaining any preferment of importance during the greater part of their lives. Gleig indeed received the dignified post of Chaplain-General at the end of his, but Croly never got anything greater than a church in the City—St Stephen's, Walbrook—where his incumbency was passed in a hand-to-hand fight with churchwardens and vestrymen in the interests of the public and the poor. He was an Irishman, as so many of the literary men of the period were, and still are, with that gift of fluency, often rising to eloquence, sometimes dropping into mere rhetoric, which is the special gift of his race. And he was not much less of an adventurer than his early friend Maginn, and flung himself, like that dashing and brilliant but unfortunate son of the Muses, upon the great world of London, with prospects no more certain and gifts less dazzling—although in Holy Orders, and not unmindful of the special topics of his profession. Here he held a certain place by continued exertion, and an industry which perhaps is the last thing for which the professor of literature cares to be distinguished, but which, in the case of such a literary man-of-all-work as Croly, is often the utmost that can be said,—his best work, with its excellent level of talent and its flashes of fine perception, being buried in the endless stores of the 'Magazine,' gaining indeed their meed of admiration at the moment, but thereafter indistinguishable from the general mass, except by the special student. Croly, like all the rest, was most anxious to remain anonymous. "You are quite right," he says, "in keeping

the names of your contributors sacred, for in default of knowing the true writer, any coxcomb fastens on any one known contributor the errors of all. All that one gets by disclosure is the miserable honour of triumph in a paper war." "I take it for granted," he adds, with fallacious assurance, "that you scrupulously burn all letters. You are mortal like the rest of us; and it would not be well that a collector of manuscripts should lay hold of your *porte-feuille* for the benefit of the reading world." Dr Croly's hope, alas! was quite unjustified: to the confusion, yet advantage, of the historian, Mr Blackwood carefully kept every letter. But Croly's epistles, of which there are many, are defended from the curiosity of the public by an armour almost as effectual. They are dull — mere records of articles, records of payments, of cheques at first treated with the lofty indifference which was one of the fashions of the time, but afterwards received with cordial welcome, as that steady source of revenue became habitual. Literature, in its details, is no more interesting, perhaps sometimes less so, than the details of any other profession; such a subject treated in so many sheets, such a book mauled or applauded,—perhaps, still more, an attack upon a forgotten measure just brought into Parliament, — having really less inherent life in them, after the moment has passed by, than a record of bales shipped or manufactures carried on. It had fortunately not become the habit then, as it is now, to reproduce in a permanent form the articles compounded for the necessities of the passing day.

Dr Croly's reputation now chiefly rests upon the curious and weird romance of 'Salathiel,' a version of

the history of the Wandering Jew, which he describes at some length as follows:—

Dr Croly to W. Blackwood.

BROMPTON, *Nov.* 3, 1827.

I have been offered five hundred pounds for the first edition of any novel or romance that I write. If you think that you can conveniently give this, I should be gratified by leaving the present work in your hands, on whose honour and punctuality I can so perfectly rely. But I by no means wish to urge you to what may be inconsistent with your purposes.

The work is conceived on the idea of a man, undying: driven in succession through all ages, all countries, pressed by violent passions, and encumbered with bitter calamities of successive kinds. Such a subject would give room for all that the human pen is capable of. Of course no one should speak of his own work. But I am satisfied that I have done as well as *I* could. And what that measure may be, your experience of my scribbling can ascertain perhaps better than I can myself.

There would be an obvious inconvenience in sending the MSS. —or indeed any part of it—to you, from the chance of loss, and the still greater inconvenience of delay: but the proofs of course of the first two or three sheets might be sent to acquaint you with the style. It is to be much [feared] that you have no London [correspondent] for publications of this kind, by which Colburn has cleared £20,000 a-year for the last three years. However, the question is merely this, Will you give five hundred pounds for a romance by an untried novelist?

The suggestion of sending a few sheets of proof to show the style does not appear to have satisfied the publisher, and the manuscript, notwithstanding all dangers of the post, would seem to have been sent to Edinburgh; but it evidently did not please Mr Blackwood, and was not published by him. Lessons upon the extravagance of literary hopes are not needed; but it is always sad to see an effort with which so many hopes were concerned fall so soon into

absolute oblivion. A reader who knew 'Salathiel' would be more hard to find nowadays than one who had studied the poets of Persia, or the most ancient mysteries of human knowledge. It had, however, its success in its day.

Not uncongenial to this mystic romance was another work which Croly, without any suggestion that he should publish it, describes in the unintentionally amusing note which follows to his friendly publisher —"the volume on the Apocalypse," of which he begs his acceptance, and respecting which, as the proper study of his profession, he had no desire to take shelter in anonymity:—

Dr Croly to W. Blackwood.

March 31, 1827.

The subject is treated in an *entirely* new way, and you may rely upon it that way is the *true* one: however, of this the world must make up its mind for itself. It has been published a few days, and I have received some very civil testimonies from some of the Bishops of their opinion. None of them, however, had gone further than a few pages, as indeed their acknowledgments were so immediate that they had no time to have read more.

Scotland reads a great deal on this subject, and I should be glad to have the work introduced into the hands of such a man as Chalmers, whose deserved reputation would give some degree of value to anything of which he thought well.

It is curious that so acute an Irish mind should not have seen through the well-known trick of the much-tried critics whose acknowledgments are "so immediate" that it is impossible they can have read more than a few pages; but humour and perception are extraordinarily apt to fail us in our own case.

G. R. Gleig was of Scottish birth and parentage, at first a soldier, who afterwards, at the end of the Peninsular war, after Waterloo, took orders, with hopes somewhat better founded than those of his contemporary. The work, however, by which the soldier-priest was best known was the military romance of 'The Subaltern,' which still retains its popularity, and is read even amid all the exciting adventure-books of modern days. It was not perhaps the sort of work which we should look for as the chief literary distinction of a clergyman; but he retained the mingled character during his whole life, and ended appropriately in the chapel of Chelsea Hospital and the post of Chaplain-General to the Forces, which is a rare and unusual instance of merit rewarded in the most legitimate and ideal way. We are told, which is a very picturesque detail, that the flag which he was wounded in capturing, at Bladensburg, hung from the pulpit in the Hospital chapel where he officiated; and he was always, at all times of his life, deeply interested in all schemes for the advantage of soldiers. 'The Subaltern' was published in the Magazine in 1826, while William Blackwood was still at the height of life and prosperity; and sixty years later Gleig was contributing to 'Maga,' under its present conductor, William Blackwood, the grandson of the founder. This long faithfulness and devotion well merits a memorial here. It has been the fate of 'Blackwood's Magazine' to secure a genuine attachment from its contributors more than any other literary organ has ever had—the same sort of feeling which makes sailors identify themselves with their ship, rejoicing in the feats which they attribute somehow to her

own personality, though they know very well what is their individual share in them, and entertaining a generous pride in the vessel, which would be but a paltry feeling were it translated into a mere self-complacence as to their own achievements. I hope this is being kept up in the younger generation: it certainly was very strong in the past.

The letters of Gleig have a warmer individual note than those of Croly; but there are still too many of them, and their subjects too much the same, to merit large quotation. On all subjects, political, religious, moral, for all kinds of reviews, criticisms, and controversies, he was to be relied upon, as much at least as any individual ever was relied on (except Wilson) by the head of affairs, who had a way of exercising his own judgment in a manner not always agreeable to the authors who surrounded him. The following remonstrance will show that Gleig was no more favoured than his fellows in this respect. It refers to some articles upon the Church, which Blackwood had received with his usual cordiality, but which do not seem to have pleased on closer examination:—

G. R. Gleig to W. Blackwood.

You are of course the best judge of what will suit the Magazine, and I have neither the right nor the inclination to find fault with the results of your judgment. I declare, however, that I should not have wasted so much time and paper upon ecclesiastical matters, had you not expressed your wish that I should do so. You stated explicitly that such subjects interested "a large and influential class of the public," hoping that I had other articles like the "Book of Common Prayer." It was in consequence of these expressions only that I wrote, contrary to my own feeling, two long articles, neither of which has been admitted. But I do not blame you. If you see that

they would not be acceptable, it is better both for you and me that they are suppressed.

I am tired of the sight of "The Smuggler," and feel more than half disposed to put it in the fire. It was originally written under a severe fit of indisposition, and every time I see it the blessed recollection of that fit comes upon me. I return it, having for the last time still further shortened it, by which it will at least not suffer.

You wish me to make my stories short. I have no more in hand except one, and that is full as long as the present. What is more, too, I cannot shorten it; but if I do any more I shall attend to your hint.

I had intended to send you a grave article this month, but I fear that I have lost the art of writing for 'Maga,' and therefore detain it. I like your number much. "The Cottager" is delightful—Wilson of course; agriculture good, though somewhat heavy; and the rest all capital in their way.

You have taken no notice of some verses which I sent you two months ago. They are not mine; but if you mean to make no use of them, I should be glad to have them returned.

On looking over your letter I perceive that one of your objections to the paper returned originates in the idea that it supports Arminianism. Now, the truth is it pretends to do no such thing. It speaks in praise of the Confession of the Armenian Church, not because that Confession is opposed to Calvinism, but because in that Church no man, even when going into orders, is called upon to subscribe that Confession. The Confession consequently stands as a pattern merely, not as a thing obligatory on the consciences of the clergy; on that account alone is the Armenian Confession lauded.

This will show, even under the influence of a temporary pique, the universal character of the work, which, whatever it was, came "convenient" to the equally universal purveyor of literary matter, all good in its way—honest, useful, and often entertaining, though without any claim to permanence, or to special inspiration of any kind. Gleig's stories, except 'The

Subaltern,' have, like his reviews and his historical efforts, dropped out of knowledge in this changed generation. In those days it was recognised that such was more or less the character of periodical writing, and the honest workman was content that his work should fulfil its temporary use, without any struggle after continuance, such as that which now fills contemporary bookshelves with multitudinous volumes—baskets of fragments in which reviews and essays, often of a very light description, are preserved for posterity. Posterity, judging by analogy, will have an ever-increasing stock of its own of this kind, and will probably care little more for the collected essays of to-day than we do for those of yesterday. The contributors of 'Blackwood' faced this probability manfully, and rarely or never attempted to reproduce their scattered work, although by this time the fashion of longer articles had begun, and instead of the half-dozen pages which were at first the common allowance (as in so many cases in the present day), the robust contributor considered a sheet of sixteen pages almost the minimum of what was expected from him. "I cannot pledge myself even to 'Maga' regularly," says Gleig. "She has my best wishes; but—but—my dear sir, it requires a great deal of writing to fill one of her sheets." Nevertheless, the sheets were always well filled and abundant—so much so that, as has been seen, the daring expedient of a second number, published along with the usual one, was tried on at least two occasions with perfect success, relieving at once the overflowing stores, and satisfying a public which, whatever the angry critics might say of personalities, &c., did not seem ever to have too much of 'Maga.'

There are some interesting references in Mr Gleig's letters to the Duke of Wellington, of whose life Blackwood was very anxious that his ecclesiastico-military contributor should write an account. Letters of the Duke of Wellington, so frequent at that time, are not so plentiful nowadays as they were when "Field-Marshal the Duke" presented his compliments to every one who addressed him, and answered or declined to answer everybody's questions; and his martial figure, so trim, so exact, so punctilious, saluting the outer world as he passed on his way, without looking at any one, has passed from popular knowledge. But it was a fine sight to see that erect and spare figure passing along wherever it might be, through crowded street or byway, while every passer-by silently uncovered before him, with the instinctive gesture of reverence which had become habitual, as if some invisible wave had swept off every hat, no cheer or outcry but a universal homage. The Duke was still, however, in the intermediate state, a politician and the head of Government, still within the sweep of criticism, and as often reviled as praised, when the idea of the life to be written by Gleig, then a country clergyman, with the fame of 'The Subaltern,' an extraordinarily successful story, hanging somewhat incongruously about him, occurred to author and publisher. But how to bring him to the acquaintance of the Duke, so that some more intimate knowledge of the life he was about to record might be gained? In this emergency the publisher bethought him of a famous method to procure what they wanted. A new edition of 'The Subaltern' was going through the press, and the Duke was known to have praised it. To dedicate

the new edition to him was the immediate suggestion, which the writer embraced eagerly. The response was as follows:—

G. R. Gleig to W. Blackwood.

Ash, *Nov.* 10, 1826.

Though I wrote you only the other day, I again put you to the expense of post for the purpose of forwarding the preceding dedication to the Duke. I received from him this morning a letter, the most gratifying that can be imagined. He there states that he has been obliged to make a rule not to give a formal sanction to any dedication, and says that it gives him particular pain to adhere to it on the present occasion. He pays the highest compliment to the book, and ends with this:—

"If, however, you think proper to dedicate the second edition to me, you are perfectly at liberty to do so, and you cannot express in too high terms my approbation and admiration of your interesting work. I have the honour to be, dear sir, yours most faithfully."

I have struck the hot iron and opened a correspondence forthwith touching the life. Of the result of that you shall hear as soon as may be. In the meanwhile tell me how you mean to bind his Grace's copy, that I may direct the Duke of Albemarle Street to put a copy of the 'Campaigns' in a similar jacket.

Let me know your intentions respecting the novel, because Mr Murray is anxious to have the first offer. The first forsooth! forgetting how handsome your conduct to me has been, and how shy his own—of anything which I may write.

A little later (I presume: there is not a hint of a date) there is again a letter from the great man to be recorded:—

I have received another letter from the Duke, the result of which is to determine me not to publish his life till after he is dead. He enters at length into his reasons for declining to furnish the materials for any immediate publication of the kind, and they are unanswerable. This is one of his expressions. After pointing out that the history of his life would be

the history of political negotiations and campaigns in which he has taken part, and that the time is yet too recent to state all these accurately, he says:—

"In respect to military transactions the same objection does not exist, at least in the same force. I am at liberty to publish what I please, and no inconvenience to the public could result from such publication. But if I insist upon publishing the truth regarding not only individuals but nations (and anything in the shape of history that was not the truth would be unworthy of your pen, as it would be very disagreeable to me, and would besides do no good), I shall for the remainder of my life be engaged in controversies of a nature the most unpleasant, as they will be with the wounded vanity of individuals and nations."

What can be said in opposition to this? I have, therefore, made up my mind, instead of compiling a wretched thing from second-hand sources, to pay court to the Duke for the purpose of securing his papers and memoranda: it may be for writing his life now, but it shall remain in MS. until its subject is gathered to his fathers. I think you will say this is a wise scheme. Such a work, if I can manage it, will be invaluable.

The 'Life of the Duke of Wellington' was written, but only published in 1862, so that Gleig kept his word. I am unable to say whether the work, when produced, was as important as he hoped it would be. It is described in the article devoted to him in the 'Dictionary of National Biography' as "founded upon Brialmont's biography, with the addition of some original matter."

Another of the contributors of this period appears with a very curious label in the museums of biography, considering that he was a regular and very useful aid in the composition of a high Tory periodical in days when political distinctions were so much more urgent

than now,—"Thomas Doubleday, poet, dramatist, biographer, *Radical politician*," is the description appended to his name in the same valuable work which we have already quoted. How his assiduous work for the Magazine was consistent with this it is difficult to understand. His aspect in his letters, which, like those of the two clergymen, are too voluminous, and at the same time too little individual, to quote at any length, throws a good deal of light upon a character not very uncommon in his day, whatever may be the case now—that of a really accomplished and highly educated man of letters in the heart of a great provincial town, engaged in active business, and yet pursuing, in the midst of this uncongenial life, the double occupation of a writer, without apparently either contact or connection between the one part and the other of so curiously divided an existence. Such men were to be found in almost every great centre of commercial activity, curiously out of place one would imagine in their surroundings, sometimes writing books, carrying on a considerable connection with magazines and newspapers of a superior kind, collecting pictures, yet not forsaking the native home or the paternal business in which their external life is passed. We doubt whether they flourish in an equal degree in the present time. The occasional notes on the reception of books by the public around him, which Doubleday gives incidentally, show that Newcastle, his place of birth and residence, possessed enough of literary opinion, at least, to count among the intelligent audience for whom every author sighs. There are few more pleasant glimpses into the great landscape, which, when hidden in the smoke of Trade, and deafened with its clamours,

seems to a cursory glance to afford so few centres of a better light.

Doubleday speaks of the requirements of "the shipping season" as delaying his contributions, and of the attention he is called upon to bestow on the business of which his father is the head, with the air of a man actively engaged in these occupations; but the stream of papers on every subject which flowed forth to Edinburgh for many years would not have disgraced a writer whose implement was the pen alone, and who was bound to no other care. It may be remembered that Wilson and Lockhart both refer to his productions as sometimes too aggressive and sometimes too lengthy, on subjects of political economy and politics, but there is not a trace of divergence in point of political opinion. A great many letters are taken up with descriptions and reports of progress in his poem of 'Diocletian,' about which he wrote with great confidence to the publisher, who was (almost) always so much pleased with his articles—a confidence which came to sad and sudden downfall when the completed poem came back to him from these usually so kind and receptive hands, and the resigned, yet aggrieved, astonishment of the poet is almost too much for words. The following short extracts, though of no great importance in his correspondence, give a glimpse at once of his literary opinions and unceasing industry. It was still the Byronic period, when the air was full of the life and acts as well as the utterances of the noble poet who was so deeply interesting to his time. In a previous letter Doubleday had made an assault on Lady Byron, characterising her as one of Miss Edgeworth's heroines, too coldly good for sympathy, and fitted only to exas-

perate any husband: which was, we think, the general view of the Magazine, always hot for the rights of genius, and though extremely chivalrous to women, confining that sentiment to those who knew their own place and held the proper helpless and dependent attitude which was the ideal of the time. Mr Doubleday, however, was not chivalrous, but stated his opinion broadly that no man could find anything ideal in a woman to whom he had been married for a few years.

T. Doubleday to W. Blackwood.

NEWCASTLE, *November* 26, 1826.

I don't know what you will think of the "Letter to Moore" which I now send; but this I know, that if I had not been aware how well used you must be to all manner of queer, out-of-the-way, eccentric articles, I should hardly have sent it. Tommy's writing the life, after burning the original, is certainly something akin to cool impudence. You will see I have mixed my ill nature with as much fun and queerness as I could, so that, excepting the last paragraph, the whole seems only half in earnest. If you think it "too bad" you must just make an *auto-da-fé* of it; for if 'Maga' will not venture, it is clear nobody else will have the courage: mind I mean that for a compliment.

I shall next, I think, go on with the dialogues on Music, and after that with the article on the Analogies. I am going slowly on with a dramatic poem—for whether the public will read it or not *I will write poetry;* and seeing what a laudable prose man I am, I think I have a right to a hobby-horse of my own now and then.

In a following letter a paragraph is added to be appended to "the plain-spoken article" above referred to, the letter to Moore, which is characteristic as coming from so libellous an age. The critic found it very hard to forgive the destruction of Byron's manuscript, especially for such a cause.

No man, you will tell me, is bound to publish what may be deemed libellous; but this is a reason for delaying, not destroying. Libels are things of a lifetime, and like harsh wine grow mild by keeping: the lapse of a few years takes out their sting. Even the death-doing gum of the Mexican Indians grows harmless in a twelvemonth or two. The character of Justice Shallow, *when written,* was a bitter libel upon that worthy knight Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote Park, near Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire (whom by the way it has immortalised). But would that have been a valid reason for burning "Henry the Fourth" and the "Merry Wives of Windsor"? The author of the 'Twopenny Postbag' will surely never say that. What! Burn Shallow and Slender and Bardolph and Pistol, and Dr Caius and Sir Hugh Evans, and Ford and Page and Poins and Dame Quickly, and Doll and Prince Hal—burn Falstaff and "all his company along with him"? No! not for all the Lucies from Adam downwards.

Time, however, and space would fail were we to attempt to record the Johnstons and Thomsons and Richardsons, the group of Irish recruits under the banner of Maginn, or the few genteeler and more cultured Englishmen, who contributed each man his article, his tale, his piece of new political discussion, his copy of verses, most of them all and every one of these items, to the always appreciative but by no means always laudatory 'Maga.' They all consented to the rejection of their papers, when it happened, with the most remarkable magnanimity. They all protested at the beginning, and some even to the end, of the connection, their complete indifference to remuneration; though most, I confess, claimed it after a while with great regularity, and were even capable of fighting for a little more with a vehemence not unworthy of Grub Street. I find few women's names among this large and changing group. Mrs Hemans and Miss

Bowles are the only lasting representatives of the half of the world, up to that time chiefly silent, though it has since then made much amends for time lost.

Mrs Hemans became a very frequent contributor to 'Maga,' and we have seen Wilson's opinion of her value. Mr Blackwood published successive volumes of her poetry, and worshipped the Muse on her occasional appearances in Edinburgh with much enthusiasm—more, indeed, than was altogether approved by his wife, who, not very tolerant of authors in general, could not away with the female of the species, and had a habit of finding a visit to Carfin essential when one of them was about to appear, leaving her sister, Miss Steuart, to do the honours. Miss Caroline Bowles, who afterwards married Southey in the end of his life, was for a long time, however, a constant contributor, her 'Chapters on Churchyards' and other prose compositions, as well as much poetry, appearing first in the Magazine. Her opinion of the ladies, her contemporaries, is prettily expressed in the following letter:—

9th July 1827.

Mrs Hemans's favourable opinion of my little books is worth that of twenty mobs as far as one's intellectual gratification is concerned, and I am obliged to you for communicating it to me. Next to your own unrivalled Joanna Baillie, Mrs H. is surely entitled to rank first among all our female writers. Many write with as much feeling, some with taste as refined and as melodious diction, but no other woman that I know of with such loftiness and holiness of thought as Mrs Hemans, always saving and excepting the gifted Joanna.

I may add, to show the view then taken of feminine contributors, a cheering note in a letter to a lady who had been unkindly treated by a publisher less

courteous and friendly than Mr Blackwood. "Your MS.," our kind editor says consolingly, "did not contain more than the usual grammatical slips which ought to be expected from a female pen"!

Quite another development of literary life and energy comes under our observation with another voluminous correspondent, in whose letters the background and machinery of the profession, its trade aspect and commercial interest, are brought very vividly before us. Curiously enough, the extremely active and energetic figure which reveals the ways of the "trade," and all the methods of procuring literary reputation and success in the Twenties, is that of one whose name suggests nothing but a mild kind of poetry, whimsically associated with the fiercest of cognomens, Alaric A.—generally believed to be Alaric Attila—Watts. The poetry has faded, I fear, altogether out of human recollection, but not the name, which owes its tenacity, probably, rather to its alarming character than to the gentle productions of its owner. Alaric, however, had entered very early into the literary lists, and describes himself as having charge at twenty of the 'New Monthly Magazine,' one of several periodicals set on foot by Mr Colburn, the London publisher, from whose office came forth almost all the array of fashionable novels—a number which nowadays we should consider insignificant, but which then seemed prodigious; and whose methods of calling attention to the productions issued under his name were the scandal and admiration of the literary world, denounced on all sides, yet quickly developed into a powerful system. The first letter I find of Watts

is very long (16 pages, supplemented by as many of memoranda, all on post paper — none of your trumpery note size such as we use in these degenerate days) and diffusely explanatory. He had been transfixed by some stray dart of the many javelins always hurtling through the air from the Edinburgh printing house, and being a man of pacific tendencies and much literary ambition, instead of filling the world with complaints as most of the victims did, he took the better way of explaining how it was that, with entire innocence, of course, he had brought himself within the range of that artillery. He had been, it would appear, a correspondent of Pringle in the earliest beginning of the Magazine, which must have been in his own extreme youth, and after that period had plunged into all that was going on of periodical literature in London, not only editing, or partially editing, the 'New Monthly' for a short time, but also doing the same for another short-lived undertaking called 'Baldwin's Magazine.' While floating thus from one literary undertaking to another, the young man fell in the way of one of Blackwood's recruiting agents, above referred to, in this case Dr Croly. The letter is dated Brompton, 17th December 1821:—

A. A. Watts to W. Blackwood.

I have accused you in my own mind, and perhaps with justice, of some want of courtesy to me. On the establishment of 'Baldwin's Magazine,' in consequence of my knowledge of, and frequent intercourse with, most of the literary men in and about London, as well as with the principal booksellers, I had frequent opportunities of becoming acquainted with literary news, &c., long before there was a likelihood of their reaching

Edinburgh in the regular course. Croly suggested that an occasional communication, even if it consisted only of the small talk of the literary coteries, would be very acceptable to you. Accordingly, on the publication of the first of those scurrilous papers in 'Baldwin's Magazine,' I enclosed a variety of literary memoranda, and, among others, a list of all B.'s contributors, and an account of the infamous tricks resorted to by a certain set to prejudice the sale of your work. I mentioned in my letter that I should have much pleasure in occasionally communicating to you such gossip as I thought likely to prove either serviceable or interesting. I may here mention that it was at my pressing instance that one of your much valued contributors refused any longer to furnish papers for the 'London Magazine.' To the communication above alluded to, which was forwarded through Messrs Cadell & Davies, *I received no reply*, not even a word of thanks for my disposition to make myself serviceable. Since then I have, of course, contented myself with reading your Magazine, but that I have ever been its warm wellwisher many of our common friends can testify. I have never omitted an opportunity, when one offered, of quoting spirited passages from it in the journals with which I happened to be connected, or over which I could exercise any control. I am ashamed of alluding to such trifles: I only mention them to prove that I have not provoked, at least willingly, such paragraphs as appeared a short time ago in your work. It would be idle to pretend that I was not vexed and hurt at an attempt of the best periodical extant to hold me up to vulgar ridicule. Croly was not the only one of our mutual friends to whom the attack was offensive. But I learn that you will endeavour to prevent the recurrence of similar insults, and I am satisfied.

The notes that follow have a certain interest even now, and at the time were no doubt keenly relished in Edinburgh, as opening up that curious background of literary life about which in all generations there is so much more curiosity than it is worth.

The 'Guardian' is conducted by a young man of the name

of Knight, son of the printer of that name at Windsor, and editor of the 'Etonian.' This man is possessed of much smartness, but he is intolerably pert and flippant. The 'Guardian' is in no respect so good as it was when Croly had the management of it. Its circulation also is very insignificant.

Hope may say what he chooses, but I *know* that he is not *bonâ fide* the author of 'Anastasius.' Much of the raw material was, however, furnished by him. It is well known who wove the final web. His book on '*Costume*' (I have it from Rees) was so deficient in the commonest essentials of composition, that Longman & Co. were obliged to get a person to rewrite it *entirely*. The idiotic dedication of 'Anastasius' is certainly Hope's.

The following epigram on 'Colburn's Magazine' I have somewhere heard repeated:—

> "Colburn, Campbell, & Co. write rather so so,
> But puff without dread or discretion;
> And each month give us scope for the Pleasures of Hope,
> But to end in the Pains of Possession."

Longman & Co. have, as you may be aware, purchased Pinnock's and Maunder's share in the 'Literary Gazette'; they now take the entire management, and in some respects editorship, upon themselves. Colburn has a share, but takes no trouble beyond that of receiving his dividend. The sale I *know* to be upwards of 3000, as I have often for weeks together superintended its publication. It is without exception the best advertising medium for books there is. I have no interest whatever in it, and scarcely now contribute a line to its pages; but I would hint that it is worth your while to be upon civil terms with Jerdan, as he has it in his power to render essential service to your publications. A review in the 'Gazette' is of use as an advertising medium. The country papers mostly exchange with him, and consequently quote numerous extracts from the 'Gazette.' These are copied from one to another, and thus you have useful paragraphs without expense. I have known twenty provincials quote anecdotes from the same article.

The 'Monthly Review' is edited by Griffyths. Francis Hodgson writes a good deal for it. Circulation about 2500.

Archdeacon Nares still continues covertly to edit Remington's dull mass of orthodoxy, the 'British Critic.' The 'Monthly' and 'British Critic' have been nicknamed *Mumpsimus* and *Sumpsimus*. They do not seem to improve a whit.

The 'Eclectic' is managed by Josiah Conder, late bookseller of St Paul's Churchyard. He writes all his poetical articles (some of which are by no means contemptible) himself. Montgomery usually furnishes one paper monthly for this work: its circulation is about 3000. There is a great deal of black bigotry and cant in its pages. But all Dissenting works have many readers.

These notes run on to an interminable length, and it is impossible to follow them, except in scraps. The gossip was all precious to the compounders of the short papers, the essayists on Things in General, which the Magazine has always loved, and especially to the framers of the 'Noctes,' after it was established, when the merest anecdote was enough to set the wheel of conversation going. "The production of Lord Byron's," which was "handed about among the duly initiated Thebans of Holland House," and which mocked at the king's visit to Ireland in "a blasphemous parody of the advent of our Saviour"; the identification of the author of another of these squibs as "Lady Morgan's gentle Knight, Sir Charles"; the alarming decrease in the circulation of Colburn's Magazine, on every number of which he lost largely, notwithstanding the most heroic puffing; the success of another periodical because of the little or no expense of its production, the contributors being all unpaid,—these were all of the greatest interest to the eager publisher in Edinburgh. Among these scraps of information and gossip the ever-recurring advices about advertisements, and the need of keeping up relations with the newspapers, came in as a chorus

in all sort of connections. "His advertisements are exceedingly profitable. I wish you would devote a portion of your cover to this object, as, besides the immediate profit, the circulation of a work is materially assisted by its advertisements." The Magazine had been very careless of all these aids, being in its beginning a romantic adventure altogether, and not founded upon the principles which the smaller fry of trade literary enterprises in London were laboriously working out. Here is a curious illustration of popular taste, which I have no doubt we should find on inquiry to be still the same in our own day:—

There is at this time, you must know, a bit of a schism between the Divan [Messrs Longman & Co.] and the Emperor of the West [Murray] about Dame Rundell and her Cookery Book. The Chancellor has referred the dispute between the old woman and M. to the lower courts: meanwhile she is preparing an improved edition of the book, which Longmans have agreed to publish. At his late sale Murray offered the old book to the trade, and was so elated by the preference given to his edition, that, after the numbers subscribed for were fixed, he informed the purchasers that they should pay 3s. 6d. instead of 3s. 10d. By this well-timed piece of generosity the subscriptions were immediately doubled. Murray's plan is by far the best as respects his publishing arrangements. He charges a good price *to the public* on his commodity, in order that he may be enabled to afford the TRADE a larger profit; and it is quite natural that the retail booksellers should interest themselves most in the sale of those works which bring them the greatest profit.

You will perhaps smile to learn that with us, next to the Scotch novels and Byron, the best selling books are Dr Kitchener's. Another impression of 2000 copies of the Cook's Oracle is now at press. I often meet the old gentleman: he is half cracked, yet there is wherewithal to be amused at in him. He was sorely smitten with your clever notice of

his book, and considers that you have through his sides aimed a deadly blow at all scientific and legitimate cookery.

Wilson's 'Valerius' [adds the annalist, whose conception of the group of writers in Edinburgh seems less clear than his knowledge of their English contemporaries] has not had fairplay in London: it is an admirable book, but I cannot describe the malevolent hatred cherished against this gentleman by the Cockneys, on the supposition that he assists in managing your Magazine. Nor is Mr Galt much less the object of their detestation. Every personal allusion or offensive paragraph in your work is forthwith attributed to him. And if his works were not generally received here as the productions of Mr Lockhart, they would perhaps stand a still less chance of having justice done them than is the case at present.

Mr Watts, however, was not an amiable critic, and there are many hard sayings scattered through these curious charts of the obscure London coteries of the day.

Charles Lamb [he says, speaking of another Magazine] delivers himself with infinite pain and labour of a silly piece of trifling, every month, in this Magazine, under the signature of Elia. It is the curse of the Cockney School that, with all their desire to appear exceedingly off-hand and ready with all they have to say, they are constrained to elaborate every petty sentence, as though the web were woven from their own bowels. Charles Lamb says he can make no way in an article under at least a week.

This prodigious budget would seem to have pleased Mr Blackwood, whose next communication was so satisfactory that Alaric begins at once to unfold his plans for being of service to the publisher and his Magazine:—

THE THATCHED COTTAGE,
WALHAM GREEN, *near* LONDON, *Janary* 29, 1822.

Now that we understand each other, I may venture one or two points in which I can be of use to you. It is my wish,

as soon as I can manage to effect it, to get our London and some of our best Provincial Editors (with many of whom I am on tolerably good terms) into a regular train of quotation from your Magazine at the beginning of each month. Sometimes when room could not be found for anything complete, a smart syllabus of its contents would answer every purpose. The advantages of having such a work of high talent quoted from are obvious. Brilliant extracts speak to the intellect of the newspaper reader if he happens to possess any; and since the accession of Colburn to the throne of imperial supremacy, people have begun to decide for themselves, and will no longer rely upon mere advertisements. Some of the London gentlemen of the press are most willing to quote clever papers from your work; but then, they argue, the matter must either be transcribed or their Magazines spoiled, and even this trifling circumstance acts as a preventive. A parcel of waste sheets forwarded to me every month would obviate this weighty difficulty; but this aid, and the distribution of about a dozen Magazines as I will suggest, would enable me to organise a plan by which you can be, I doubt not, very extensively quoted. I will write more particularly on this subject on the next opportunity.

Again, I propose, if you consider it will be of the slightest service, to give you a private letter, consisting chiefly of loose memoranda of whatever is passing in the principal literary circles in London or even in the Trade, opinions of your work, &c. Some of your finest strokes of satire have lost their point with us, from being of too local a nature: it will be but fair to give *us* a bit now and then which *we Londoners* can fully enter into the spirit of.

Lastly, though I place but slight value on my individual assistance as a contributor, I have it often in my power to secure articles from well-known men for your pages, so that I may become the medium of clever communications when I am unable to originate them. . . . No ceremony need ever be used in the rejection of any paper proceeding from me which does not appear to suit your purposes.

This letter gives an amusing picture of the literary handy-man, ready for every use, from furnishing

paragraphs for the newspapers to purveying articles for the Magazine. We do not find much indication of the latter in the rest of the correspondence; but the use of provincial papers in spreading the name of Blackwood by apt quotation is again and again referred to as the most excellent and profitable means of advertisement, costing nothing and bringing in many subscribers. Mr Watts was thus unconsciously the literary parent of those busy gentlemen who compile such publications as 'Tit-bits' and the 'Review of Reviews,' though his motive perhaps was higher, since he intended not only to supply material costing nothing for his newspapers, but to render a service to the original source from which that material was drawn—an idea not, we fear, much cultivated now.

The following antiquated gossip may still have a certain interest. Mr Alaric Watts was not very good-natured in his comments, let us hope chiefly because a story is generally more telling in a report of this kind when it is seasoned with a little venom, and not from any darker motive. But the great Potentate of Albemarle Street, the Emperor of the West, had many detractors.

PUTNEY, *Jan.* 10, 1822.

Some time ago Murray entered into an arrangement by which he was to give Stewart Rose a thousand guineas for a complete edition of Ariosto, upon which the literary exquisite is said to have employed himself for these two years past. The other day, however (so his friend Lord John Russell told my brother-in-law), he received a laconic epistle from Murray declaring off the bargain, and mentioning that he had another quick hand engaged on it, who would be "ready" directly. Now the said Stewart Rose taketh this very much to heart, and awful consequences are likely to ensue.

Abuse of Murray continues to be the subject, at great length, of Mr Watts's following letters. Here, however, is a sketch of a literary celebrity of the time which is a little less diffuse than usual, and not without vividness as a picture. It comes among the gallery of portraits of contemporary writers, especially gentlemen of the press, with which Watts regularly furnished Blackwood, probably by way of material for the satires on London life which he requested :—

The author of 'L——' has written a powerful philippic against avarice. He is one of the greatest misers breathing. His income net is about £1800 a-year; add to this the profits of his Rectorship at Kew and Petersham, and another living in Devonshire, which bring it to about £2500. With these ample means he lives in a garret in Princes Street at the rate of about 20s. a-week. To the business of poet and critic he adds that of *wine-merchant.* I have dealt with him for many years in this commodity. He sells good and cheap, but will cheat you if he can. It is most surprising that such things should be winked at, and that he should retain his gown about his shoulders. He is one of the most impudent egotists I have ever known, and yet he is really possessed of first-rate talents—an anomaly, as I believe our quacks are usually what they seem. I once called upon him, and found him at dinner. On a dirty oaken table without a tablecloth were arranged a few cracked and broken pieces of crockery. In a few minutes the maid entered with a teal and a dish of green peas (this was at a time of the year when they were at least a guinea a quart). I expressed my surprise at his inconsistency, when he observed, "I care nothing for appearances; but my stomach fares as well as if I inhabited a palace: my dinner yesterday cost me £2, 7s.,—this is not an unusual thing with me." I went away thoroughly disgusted. He has written a capital lampoon on the 'New Monthly' gang, which I must obtain and send you.

Watts afterwards changed his residence to Leeds, where, with considerable grumbling to be banished

from town, he continued for some time as editor or manager of the 'Leeds Intelligencer,' one of the oldest of contemporary newspapers. Here we find him stronger than ever in business tactics, and the need of pushing the Magazine, through the unpaid advertisement by quotation in the Provincial press, with which he had a large connection. The following letter is dated from Leeds, Nov. 8, 1822. This was at the time of the king's visit to Scotland, when the country, as is well known, with Sir Walter Scott at her head, had gone wildly out of her wits with loyalty, and the First Gentleman in Europe had received such a reception as would not have been unworthy of the wisest and best monarch in the world. Blackwood shared the general passion, and commemorated the event in his own way with that mingled daring and calculation which best answers success. He published another second number almost simultaneously with the first, which he called the Coronation number, and in which he embodied the frantic loyalty of the moment, and in so doing carried off triumphantly an accumulation of articles which perhaps on their own merits would not have taken the first place. This experiment has never been tried in periodical literature (not newspaper) but by himself. It was on this subject that Watts addressed him :—

Your king's visit made an extraordinary noise all over the kingdom, but especially in London, where it was received with perfect enthusiasm by the 'Times,' and approbation by the moderate Whigs. The leading article in that number was a most splendid piece of writing. All I could do was to write off and get a few extracts into several of the Provincial papers, —the Cornwall, Chester, Devonshire, Staffordshire, Liverpool,

Manchester, and several of the Yorkshire journals. This I did, and shall now have an opportunity of accomplishing regularly. If you will have the trouble to have ten or a dozen Magazines addressed to various newspapers which I will point out, I will engage that you shall be quoted largely every month by upwards of twenty of the best Provincials. This will be of great service in making 'Maga' known. I shall of course give her an extended notice myself every month, and profit by every possible opportunity of mentioning her in other ways. In order to further my views in respect to Newspaper Quotations, you must have one or two brief articles in each number. If this were the case, at least ten papers would copy voluntarily from the twenty I shall have in training; but unless you give them something perfect in itself of a reasonable length for quotation, there will be no chance of our accomplishing our aim. I could command twelve papers within sixty miles of this place, all well circulated. Turn this over in your mind. I am preparing a notice of some length for the 'Intelligencer,' which I shall have extracted as often as I can.

In respect to this, Watts adds in another letter—

It is much to be wished that our friend Christopher would give us an article composed of short light pieces, for the purpose of inducing newspaper quotation, something after the manner of D'Israeli, classed under a general head. You would find your account in this.

The idea of Christopher the perverse lending himself to any such trade transaction is incredible, and we cannot but feel that Blackwood himself, unaccustomed to these modes of business, must have grown very tired of the continual suggestion. I cannot find, indeed, that he took any notice of those persistent and often repeated solicitations. He writes in his usual large manner of thanks for articles sent by Watts, and the news that were always welcome to him; but the bait of the twenty newspapers all

ready to quote and to extend the reputation of 'Maga' does not seem to have tempted him. Probably he had too high an opinion of "my Magazine" to think such contrivances needful.

But the news and the anecdotes, whether perfectly trustworthy or not, were always palatable, and sweetened the many irrelevancies of the correspondence. Specially when the news was of the circle of Albemarle Street, and the aristocracy of letters which was supposed to give itself airs in that abode of the English gods, was the gossip agreeable in Edinburgh, a little sore with the consciousness that its best men were beginning to be drained away. Lockhart had gone a short time before, and perhaps it was with no great distress that it was heard in the saloon in Princes Street that Murray's new paper, 'The Representative,' was not the great success it had been expected to be. The following report is curious, from the introduction of the somewhat fantastic figure of the mystic and extraordinary youth, whom, at that early period of his career, nobody pretended to understand. Watts writes from London, October 7, 1826:—

It is certainly not true that the entire loss has come out of Murray's pocket. Lords Lowther and Hertford have, I am confidently informed, borne a large part of it. Murray was much pleased with the philip [*sic*] at young D'Israeli in the 'Noctes' a month or two ago. This fellow has humbugged him most completely. After the tricks of which he has been guilty, he will scarcely dare show his face in London again for some time. You are aware, I daresay, that 'Vivian Grey' was palmed off upon Colburn by Mrs Austin, the wife of the Honourable Mr Warde's [*sic*] lawyer, as the production of the author of 'Tremaine'! and upon this understanding Colburn gave three times as much as he would otherwise have done.

Nobody, it is apparent, had a notion then what that curious youngster, with all his strange pretensions, was to be, and his behaviour at this crisis earned him many hostile comments. But Watts's notes are never, as we have said, of an optimistic kind. He has a keen eye for the smallnesses of the great, and those mean details into which, with a little care on the part of the reporter, the largest transaction may be brought down. Here is a glimpse of the *dessous des cartes* of an affair which very much interested and dazzled the spectators of that time, the melting away of the mystery which had surrounded the wonderful Abbey of Fonthill, with all its secret magnificence, so carefully defended from the eyes of the crowd. Beckford's grandeur and seclusion were no doubt sham to a great degree, and the ruthless vulgarising of the mystery hurt nobody's sentiment: but the pleasure with which the romantic palace, with all its rare and beautiful collections, was unveiled, and the lowest of trade tricks played amid its conventional prodigies and wonders, brings squalor and misery into the very heart of the shrine.

Beckford sells Fonthill Abbey and its appendages to old Farquhar for upwards of £300,000, reserving to himself a third of the pictures and books, and purchasing afterwards, by private contract, another third. It occurred to Phillips, the auctioneer, that the sale of these effects would afford a glorious opportunity for the exercise of his accustomed ingenuity and honesty. He first goes round the trade in London to solicit book commodity of all descriptions to fill up vacuums in the Library at Fonthill. In short, the better half of the books sold were what they were described, the rakings and refuse of the Row and its vicinity. This infamous trash was mixed up with some really splendid and valuable items, once the *bonâ fide* property of Mr Beckford,

and catalogued as the Fonthill Library, collected with infinite taste and expense during a period of forty years. I do not speak upon slight authority, for my friend Hermann, one of the proprietors of the 'Intelligencer,' who was at that time in Wiltshire, inspected the books, and described the great part of them as the vilest trash that ever were sold at an auction mart.

The influential journalist, with the twenty newspapers which he had it in his power to turn into unconscious mediums of advertisement, and his own special journal on which he expected to establish his fortunes, seems to have come to little with advancing years. Instead of realising a large sum by the transfer to other hands of the 'Leeds Intelligencer,' he would appear to have had the worst of the bargain with a "smart" competitor, and to have returned to town little the better for his exile. The last letter I find addressed to him by Mr Blackwood is full of thanks for the "splendid accompaniment" of a recent letter, the "magnificent presents," which would appear to have been copies of the Annuals which were the favourite productions of the period, filled with contributions from all the most famous names, and illustrated with the most wonderful of engravings on steel, and all the triumphs of typography,—yet, perhaps, more surely destined to the contempt of oblivion than almost any production of the press. Mr Blackwood regrets that he can make no return for these sumptuous articles. "All I can do is to show them and speak of them to my friends in the way they merit to be spoken of, as the finest specimens which have ever appeared." They were too late to be noticed in an article in the month's issue, but he hopes there will be "something good in next number."

"I need not tell you, however," says the cautious publisher, "that this is a thing of which I cannot speak with certainty, as so much depends upon the circumstances of the moment. For unless a writer happens to be in the humour for it, and can do the article with his whole heart and soul, it is worth nothing, and is abandoned." "A writer" here evidently means Wilson, who very often found himself unable to take up a subject which was suggested to him "with his whole heart and soul," too much one would say for any collection of Annuals. Mr Blackwood ends his letter with an apology for not having written, which is not caused, he says, by any feeling of unfriendliness. "But you have been busy with your own concerns as I have been with mine, and have not had time to take that interest in 'Maga,' or to send me literary news, &c., as formerly, and therefore our correspondence has of course slackened."

There is another letter in W. Blackwood's handwriting of the same date, addressed to Dr Gifford, the editor of the 'Standard,'—then a comparatively new paper,—which throws an amusing light upon the subject to which Watts had devoted himself, and shows that the aid of the newspapers upon which he insisted so strongly was not to be had, at least in the case of a London paper, without reciprocity. Gifford was one of Maginn's men, one of the innumerable Irishmen who led the literary brigade in London, and it would seem (the letter is imperfect) that he had attempted to insist upon conditions to which the manager of 'Maga' did not choose to conform. Blackwood begins by saying that the word "grati-

tude" was entirely inapplicable between Baldwin, the proprietor of the 'Standard,' and himself, as each had equally served the other.

W. Blackwood to Dr Gifford.

EDINBURGH, 22*nd Nov.* 1827.

All my friends respect you, and hope the 'Standard' will be successful. I do so also, most sincerely: but I am forced to say that by ceasing to allude to, quote from, or commend my Magazine, you have placed both myself and my friends in an unpleasant situation. The Public must see that you have ceased to do that which you formerly often did: and you have frankly intimated to me that until my Magazine again speaks of the 'Standard,' and that in the way you wish, I must not expect you to praise it as you did in former times. I shall be extremely sorry for this, as I know the value of your able commendation: but your resolution has certainly something of the character of imposition of terms, which would do away with the grace and pleasure of praise. Should any of the gentlemen who write in my Magazine of themselves speak highly of the 'Standard,' it will give me much pleasure: but I shall not consider myself entitled to suggest the subject to any of them again, as I should then feel that I was asking them to do something which must be done, or the penalty incurred of your discountenance.

I must pause to put in here a good-humoured little note addressed to the editor of a Glasgow paper, now most eminent and of large circulation, taking a very different view of such matters:—

W. Blackwood to Samuel Hunter, 'Herald' Office, Glasgow.

I admit most freely that the sneers by Tickler and the C. N. notes are very thoughtless and uncalled for. You would do quite right in giving us a good dressing. I have only to repeat that while I know there was no intention to sneer at your paper, yet as the thing is so unguarded and general, you would do quite right in giving us a good cut, and I hope you know me well enough to believe that I would be the last person in the

world to find fault with anything you might choose to say for or against 'Maga.' I would also hope that in our last number you would find such good stuff that while you castigate you will likewise give the devil his due.

Before we leave the subject of the newspaper, I am tempted to quote a letter which, though unconnected with the Magazine and its history, gives a pleasant account of a fact which will, I am sure, be interesting to many readers of the present day. There is no existing newspaper of a more distinct individuality—nay, we may say of so distinct an individuality—as the 'Spectator'; a journal which, amid all the chops and changes of modern journalism, stands with the personality of a man (or might we say two single gentlemen rolled into one?), amid the organs and mouthpieces of popular opinion: changing, too, by times, though not by the methods of changed proprietorship or editors ousted or supplanted, but by natural action of reason or preference—always recognisable, always prone to impression, capable of riding a hobby a little too far, and of being taken in as we all are; sometimes a little *arrièré*, sometimes a little too advanced, philosophical, and credulous, with a marked character in every variation, which it is always refreshing to meet with. The letter which follows is from Mr Rintoul, a Scotch journalist, who had maintained a thread of connection and friendship with Blackwood for many years, and who thus announces the founding of the new journal. He had been, as the reader will see, previously the editor of another paper. At the present time, when an entire literary staff is sometimes turned out at a day's notice, so to speak, it is a pleasure to see the reverse action occurring once in a way:—

R. S. Rintoul to W. Blackwood.

159 STRAND, *July* 7, 1828.

I have, in consequence of attempts to vulgarise and betwaddle the 'Atlas'—contrary to our compact and to the line of conduct which gave that paper its literary character—withdrawn, and all the literary contributors are with me. We have begun the SPECTATOR, also on the neutral ground in politics, but decided in its criticisms. I have ordered you ten copies of the first number. Help me to some publicity in the North. Tell your London agent to send me the Magazine as heretofore. I should say both the Magazines, for I owe you a notice of the Agricultural,—"it is a debt of honour, and it must be paid" on the appearance of No. 2. I decided on the 'Spectator' too late to get my Prospectus in last Magazine. I shall have a new advertisement in time for the next. Perhaps Mr Cadell might occasionally advertise a little in the 'Spec.' on your account, but our advertising space is to be very limited.

Six months later, the editor of the 'Spectator' adds an outline of its high aims and motives, which, though the reader may be tempted to smile at a certain assumption of superiority, and at the profound conviction of the writer that the public had but to know in order to recognise that superiority—have probably been as nearly carried out as is permitted to man. Rintoul himself had a bitter struggle, and died, we believe, without achieving the success he hoped for: but his successors have carried his forlorn standard to a point at which—as is so rarely the case—this high ideal appears not altogether unjustified; and have retained a character, an honesty, and a personality far above the level of the ordinary newspaper. Rintoul writes, six months after the establishment of his paper, with the thrill of that ideal in every word, and hopes which, if fallacious, were never ignoble:—

'Spectator' Office, 159 Strand, 11*th Nov.* 1828.

It is very gratifying to me to learn that the 'Spectator' has gained the favourable opinion of your friends, among whom I know must be numbered some of the best judges of the age and country. I should not have presumed to suggest that a notice in the Magazine would be of service; but since you hint that such a compliment is likely to come impromptu, I will frankly say that it may be of great use indeed at this season, when so many people think of changing their papers or taking in new ones, to have the true character of the 'Spectator' made known to the exceedingly numerous class of readers among whom the Magazine circulates, and to whom a better species of weekly newspaper reading than the greater part of the London press supplies may be a desideratum. There is at least one feature of resemblance between the 'Spectator' and 'Maga' herself—straightforwardness, and the preference of plain strong sense to affected finery or to Cockney simplicity. I suppose our Politics, such as they are, must be different; but, in the first place, we do not profess to discuss politics, though we record them historically, and, I think, with unwonted impartiality, our motto in everything being "fair-play." Secondly, when we do happen to deal with an abstract principle which is commonly classified as belonging to the department of political science, we take it up rather as a branch of Ethics, and follow it out, regardless whether the results may seem to favour one set of political opinions or the opposite. In short, we have nothing to do with Party. Is it not right that there should be one paper in England to maintain this position? I do it honestly, and from temperament. I mean my aim is honest, however imperfect the attainment.

There is no cant in the 'Spectator,' no indecency, no impiety—may I add no trash, and not much dulness. We have already obtained, even from fastidious critics in high station, the sobriquet of the gentleman's paper, no bad distinction in these times.

You will observe it would be a mistake to consider the 'Spectator' only as a literary periodical. It is a newspaper and miscellany of general entertainment, and its criticisms on literature, music, and the drama, together with the essays and

off-hand remarks on novels, manners, and points of humour, may be regarded as an addition to as perfect a compilation of newspaper information of every kind as respectable and cultivated families could desire, or ever was contained in one sheet of paper.

. . . The 'Atlas' is a pure commercial speculation by betting people in the city. The 'Spectator' is not a mere commercial speculation: having myself invested a large sum of my own, and obtained the support of most respectable friends to a still greater amount to establish the concern, I, of course, am anxious that this capital shall not be lost; but there is not one of us—myself, contributors, or supporters as capitalists—who is not even more anxious that our success should tend to elevate and improve the tone of the newspaper press.

This is a digression; but it seems of sufficient interest to warrant admission. The two friends had coolnesses, as was perhaps inevitable. Christopher, I fear, though he "hinted an intention" of noticing the new venture in December, just at the moment when it was most important, did not carry out that laudable intention—reminding us of Blackwood's regretful remark, that if a subject was not taken up with the whole heart and soul, it was apt to be laid aside and abandoned. And Rintoul was slow of reviewing a work of Wilson's: but yet these offences were mutually excused and condoned. Whether 'Maga' ever did anything to push the fortunes of the new-born journal I am unable to say, but the correspondence continued for some time on the most friendly terms.

Another correspondent of Mr Blackwood deserves a record, not for his literary aid, but for those letters of private news and gossip which the circle in Edinburgh prized so highly, which often helped in the com-

position of the 'Noctes,' and which are sometimes still interesting though so far back, giving a glimpse into the busy world as it was in those days. Mr Crofton Croker is the liveliest of all the gossips, and records his anecdotes with the ease of a person moving familiarly in the society he described. His position, however, was not a very exalted one. He was a clerk in the Admiralty, appointed thereto by his namesake (but not we believe relation) the much less attractive John Wilson Croker, whose communications are in singular contrast with those of the lively and agreeable young man who had come across from Ireland in the traces of Maginn, and at once leaped into a place among the fiery journalists and article writers of his race, softened and modified by his clerkship, which probably restrained him from joining in that headlong rush of competition which spoiled the others. The newspaper world would seem to have been crowded with Irishmen in these days, so many that it would be curious that they had not moulded the world into compliance with all Irish desires, had it not been for the fact that most of them were "black Protestants," often Orangemen, and ready to resist with much more violence than any mere Englishman the demands of their compatriots. Crofton Croker was the author of Tales, from the legendary lore of his own and other countries, and otherwise would seem from his letters to have played the pleasant *rôle* of a young man about town, seeing many people of interest, and entering into general society, not confined to the journalistic and literary world, with which alone Maginn and his myrmidons were usually familiar.

"As you think London gossip desirable," he writes in the early part of 1823, "I will be a little more on the outlook for 'that kind of thing,' as our friend Matthews says."

26 *March* '23.

Mr D'Israeli has been quite pleased by your account of his 'Curiosities of Literature.' I happened to be at a little dance in his house the evening he received 'Maga.' He had been looking forward to your account of his book, and came up to me rubbing his hands and looking so pleased. "Well," said he, "I have had a letter from Mr Blackwood, and a copy of his Magazine—have you seen it?—he speaks of me really in too flattering a strain. I am quite overcome! and what is singular, there are some particulars in that article which I know not how the writer could get at. 'Blackwood's Magazine' was always to me incomprehensible, and 'tis even more so now than ever. It is the most puzzling mixture of information and humbug, of learning and absurdity, that I have ever met with; but for me I can only thank Mr Blackwood for the greatest kindness."

"Blackwood's kindness," echoed a gentleman present, who, I suspect, was smarting under the lash of Christopher North, Esq.,—"who can depend upon his kindness? To-day he will praise, and to-morrow abuse; and even his praise is not worth having, as he is laughing at you all the time!"

April 1823.

Absurd as it may appear, we Cockneys turn our eyes towards the northern metropolis for information of our own proceedings. Since D'Israeli has caused you some fun in the last number, I may mention that he did not seem displeased by your jokes. In one note which I have had from him he talks of riding triumphantly on Hogg's back through the pages of 'Maga,' and adds that the 'Noctes' seem to have revived with all their original dramatic spirit, and will have it that Mr Galt is the creator of the *dramatis personæ*, "whom," he continues, "there is no answering, as they answer themselves." In another letter he says, "There is great genius in that publication

['Maga'], and, in spite of my conscience, I am amused by that Literary Saturnalia. But some grave arguments exist against it. The abuse of Ridicule is something worse than ridiculous."

The following paragraph refers to the tremendous convulsion caused both in the trade and in the literary profession by the crash of Constable, which ruined Sir Walter Scott, and did vast damage on every side :—

3rd February 1826.

You ask me for London news. No words can describe the confused state of affairs here, in consequence of the late stoppages. No business is doing in the publishing way except by Colburn. Murray has half-a-dozen volumes ready, but is unwilling to subscribe them, not knowing whom to credit. Constable's failure, which is said to be a bad one, has completely destroyed all confidence. Hurst & Robinson's here is regarded with great distrust. Knight & Jarvis (?) have appeared in the 'Gazette,' and Whittaker's name, it is supposed, will be there on Saturday. Rumour even whispered something about the stability of Longman & Co., but this, of course, is without any good foundation.

Murray's 'Representative' made a wonderful stir before publication. Every morning paper — even the 'Times' — trembled. The eventful day of its appearance came, and everybody was disappointed! The leading articles—I know not who wrote them—have been tedious to a degree, and intolerably long. Since the appearance of the 'Representative' we have had, such as they were, three pieces of news. Murray had all these first; but yet the editor contrived to put them into his paper in such a way that nobody read them. I never heard the popular voice so unanimous on any point as it is in respect to Murray's paper. It is monstrously dull, and, unless something better is produced, the 'Representative' will not answer. An effort has been made by the Cockneys to father the editorship on Lockhart, about and at whom numberless newspaper paragraphs have been fired off.

Lockhart, I think, will make the 'Quarterly' spin. The

next number is anxiously looked for. It is said that under Coleridge's management (four numbers) the sale has fallen off four thousand. It is uphill work for Lockhart to retrieve this.

A long letter of two years later plunges us still further into the record of new newspapers and the somewhat noisy annals of the Press:—

January 1828.

Mr Buckingham has started another weekly review, called the 'Athenæum,' published every Wednesday. Two numbers have appeared—the first dull beyond description, the second somewhat better, but the whole appearance promises only a lumbering concern. Colburn has taken a half-share in the 'Athenæum,' but nevertheless I question if it will answer. Two attacks have appeared in it on Lockhart by your friend Forbes, and an inquiry is promised into his qualifications as editor of the 'Quarterly.'

Hunt's memoirs of Byron appear written in his worst style, and, moreover, in all the bitterness of a disappointed man. Judging from the extracts which have appeared in the periodicals in Colburn's interest — viz., the 'New Monthly' and 'Athenæum,' for the book is not yet published — it contains little new or interesting to the public. I think it calls for an article of Christopher North, which will demolish at one blow such a mass of impertinence, frivolity, and breach of that common faith which holds society together. Moore has spit forth some bitter epigrammatic verses on 'Leviticus'; but a smashing heavy hand is really wanted to deal with a work of such pretensions.

If I had the time and the means within my reach I would like to do an article for you on Colburn's puffery; but I throw out the hint, as you may perhaps get it better done elsewhere. The idea would be, stating C. N.'s happiness at no longer having the trouble of reading new books for the purpose of criticising them: that two very respectable and talented gentlemen had been for some time past retained by the best publisher of the day to review all his important publications, and to acquaint the public with their opinion thereon before the appearance of

these works. That Messrs Ollier and Forbes, the critics in question, from their intimate connection with the publisher and authors, were enabled to inform the public of many authentic particulars which otherwise they would have remained in ignorance of, as for instance (and here you might quote half-a-dozen of Colburn's puffs) that Lady Charlotte Bury's novel of 'Flirtation' secured the fair author an autograph letter on the subject of her work of the most flattering nature from His Most Gracious Majesty; that Mr Lister's recent novel procured the distinguished author the honour of invitations to dinner from four crowned heads during his recent excursions on the Continent, &c., &c., &c.: in fact, if you look through any file of papers for the last three months you will find an abundant supply of such paragraphs.

Colburn's system is really carried to an offensive length. He is, I understand, very angry with the poor Doctor for the mention of his manufacture of novels in Whitehall. "What is it possible," he exclaims, turning up the whites of his eyes,—"what is it possible I can have done to call forth such an attack on my respectability and character from Dr Maginn?"

Poor Lady Morgan! her 'O'Briens and O'Flaherties' seems to have fallen dead, completely dead, from the press. The book is decidedly dull, but still her name ought to have carried an edition through. Colburn, I hear, swears that Jerdan's having discovered it was an improper book for ladies to read has cost him five hundred pounds, and really this is not impossible. The man of New Burlington Street is therefore very angry with the moral editor of the 'Literary Gazette,' and to this has been attributed the taking up of the 'Athenæum.' Jerdan smarts, but nevertheless chuckles at his own impartiality—just criticism and duty to the public, &c., &c. I believe, too, from my soul that Jerdan fancies all this; but the fact is, he is naturally of that disposition that in the very face of truth he is continually doing flattering if not kind things to the set of literary midges which buzz about him and consider his commendations as sufficient to establish their reputation as wits, scholars, and poets.

We have reported perhaps too many of the records

of bygone news and talk, especially as the present time has gone so far beyond any efforts of its fathers in the way of what we no longer call puffing but log-rolling, or various other unintelligible names—the art by which literary coteries uphold each other in all times, and in every quarter of the world. The system is pure nature, as well as a device of the Trade, and therefore will never be changed until we all become such highly superior persons that the prejudices and the prepossessions of humanity will have grown dim in us, and we shall have ceased to like our friends, and—to speak mildly—turn a cold shoulder upon those we are less attached to. We have all smarted on the one hand, as much perhaps as we have felt uncomfortably conscious of excessive plaudits on the other: the balance is tolerably well kept on the whole, and the public but little taken in. But if any Mr Jerdan of the present day proclaimed a book to be improper reading for ladies, we fear that would be more likely to add to its popularity than to detract from it.

The enormous correspondence of these busy and active years is as like as anything can be to the flutter of a large and changing company in an open and liberal house. The dusty leaves thrill when the strings are untied and the covers taken off, with a sensation of life and talk and human movement, every man concerned most with his own matters, notwithstanding the social murmur of many voices together, recounting his own doings, making his private appeal for support, for sympathy, for pardon,—for every sentiment is involved. Occasionally we find praises and applauses on one side, gradually growing milder, dying away altogether: and enthusiasms of trust on

the other, scarcely moved by the first gentle rejection or postponement, but developing by degrees into a sense of neglect and gradual alienation. One friend drops into the shadows here and there: another comes to the front and takes his place. It is an epitome of the course of life.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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